VOLTAIRE

GEORG BRANDES

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VOLTAIRE

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By GEORG BRANDES

VOLUME TWO

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CONTENTS

VOLUME TWO

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	WANDERING LIFE	3
II	LUNEVILLE AND PARIS	39
III	PRUSSIA	60
IV	JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU	83
V	IN SWITZERLAND	105
VI	POETRY AND SATIRE	136
VII	FERNEY	147
VIII	THE WRITING OF HISTORY	154
IX	TOURNAY	160
X	ADVOCATE OF THE RIGHT	175
XI	THE FLAME OVER EUROPE	220
XII	CATHERINE II	240
XIII	PRECURSORS OF THE EARTHQUAKE	262
XIV	DEPARTURE FROM FERNEY	308
XV	TRIUMPH AND DEATH	320
XVI	APOTHEOSIS	355
	INDEX	363

WANDERING LIFE

I

WANDERING LIFE

1

In May, 1739, Voltaire and the Marquise du Châtelet set out from Cirey on a journey which seldom permitted them more than a brief return to their refuge, and which extended over several years. The Châtelet family had come into a considerable fortune, but as it could not be collected without a long and complicated suit which required Voltaire's aptitude for the law, he sacrificed his own convenience to do his friend the favor of going with her from one place to another, until she won the suit and became rich.

A cousin of the owner of Cirey, Marc-Antoine du Châtelet, Marquise de Trichâteau, who died in April, 1740, had left to Voltaire's host and hostess, together with other properties, a little principality situated between Trèves and Jülich. Thus the clever and pretty Emily became a princess. But she set very little store by that title and wished to sell her principality. Voltaire tried to interest the King of Prussia in it, but with no success.

The couple went to Brussels and there divided their time between the innumerable hearings of the law-suit and the studies each had undertaken. The Duke of Aremberg took them for a fortnight to his estate at Enghien; there were wonderful gardens and fireworks and feverish games of chance. Then they went to Paris. At the time of their arrival the city was in a tumult, celebrating the wedding of the eldest daughter of the King, Elisabeth, to the Infante of Spain.

Voltaire had submitted two tragedies to the Comédie Française, *Zulime,* and his latest work, *Mahomet.* With his customary impatience he hoped to see the first performance of *Mahomet,* although his stay in Paris was for three weeks only. At the time of his departure the actors had not even read the play, and when it was performed after several years, the authorities promptly suppressed it.

Voltaire was not at all in their graces. He published a collection of verse and prose, *Recueil de Pièces fugitives en Prose et en Vers,* which contained the first two chapters of the work *Le Siècle de Louis Quatorze* and a number of poems. It was confiscated. It had never occurred to Voltaire that he could be punished for the publication of work that glorified the seventeenth century and Louis XIV; the Ministry had a different opinion. The publisher was fined 500 francs and besides had to close his shop for three months.

Voltaire writes to d'Argenson that in turning out this historical work he had never imagined he was doing anything more than the work of a good, conservative patriot: in any other age such a task would have been encouraged by the government: "Louis XIV gave to Valincour, Pélisson, Racine, and Despreaux a pension of 6,000 livres to have his history written, but they never did it. And I am persecuted because I carried out what they were supposed to do. I erect a monument to the honor of my country and I am crushed under the stone which I use for it."

This complaint was logical.

Frederick the Great when Crown Prince had asked Voltaire to publish his *Anti-Machiavel.* This the latter eagerly prepared to do and the work was set in type. But Frederick ascended the throne and he changed his mind. Perhaps because he foresaw the difficulties in following as King the theories he had glibly put forward as Crown Prince, and perhaps also (as he maintained to Voltaire) because this book contained passages which might give offense to certain powers. He therefore requested Voltaire to halt the publication. This, however, was more easily said than done. The publisher, expecting a considerable profit from the work would not give it up. Vainly Voltaire offered to pay him his expenses four times over; in vain he tried, while correcting the proofs, to make alterations and revisions that would render various passages idiotic and hence unpublishable. He did not succeed in inducing the publisher to release his prey, nor in obtaining the King's gratitude for the alterations.

Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet went to Lille to visit his niece, Madame Denis, who was holding reception, as her husband had received a promotion. They found the theatrical manager La Noue in difficulties. Frederick had ordered this man to bring a French company to Berlin. La Noue had done so in the natural hope of earning a profit from the venture. Then suddenly the King cancelled his order: he preferred to wait until after peace was concluded. Of course, La Noue suffered heavy losses as a consequence.

But this man made Voltaire an offer to stage *Mahomet* while the poet was in Lille. The performance scored an immense success in the little Flemish town. Even the priests, whom custom did not allow to attend a theater, arranged to have a private performance. The enthusiasm was even greater when, during an intermission, Voltaire read a dispatch he had just received from Frederick, saying that he had won the battle of Mollwitz. This was Frederick's first victory, to be followed by so many others. When Voltaire read the dispatch aloud the audience cheered wildly.

About this time Voltaire lost at one blow 32,000 livres, by the bankruptcy of tax collector Michel. He who had been called avaricious, did not complain, but was content to write the following epigram:

Michel au nom de l'Eternel
Mit jadis le diable en déroute;
Mais après cette banqueroute
Que le diable emporte Michel!

In Paris Madame du Châtelet purchased for 200,000 francs the palatial Hôtel Lambert, which had been decorated by Le Brun and Le Sueur; Voltaire had a little apartment on the second floor, but he lived there only a few weeks, for, in 1747, Madame du Châtelet sold the palace for 500,000 francs.

After stopping a month in Cirey the couple returned to Brussels, where they found the court-proceedings far enough advanced to make their presence indispensable for some time.

From Brussels they went to Paris, where *Brutus* was having an enormous success.

2

Voltaire had just begun to get settled in Paris, when the opposition to him received a new and unexpected impetus. Copies of a compromising and confidential letter addressed by him to the King of Prussia were distributed everywhere and put under the doors of influential persons, until it became the talk of the town. (It was the letter of May 15, 1742.) Voltaire, observing the general excitement over his lack of patriotism, declared that the expressions in the letter had been tampered with, and tormented himself and others in trying to find out who had stolen, falsified and distributed the letter. We are sorry to say that there can be no doubt that back of the whole scandal was the great King himself. He would employ any unscrupulous means to acquire Voltaire for his daily companion, and to this end meant to make his life impossible in the highest Parisian circles.

The poet could insist as long as he pleased that the copies were false. False or not, this letter was an ill-chosen prologue to the performance of *Mahomet*. It offered, to one who saw in it a satire against all religion, as many vulnerable spots as *Le Tartuffe* had offered in the seventeenth century.

In all the cafés the play was inveighed against. Piron, who always blamed Voltaire when one of his own plays failed, Desfontaines, who was happy to meet his opponent on a field where the offensive was so simple and his adversary's defense could so easily be penetrated, finally Voltaire's opponents among the clergy, proclaimed that the play was only on the surface an attack upon Islam; but in reality, was an attack on the Christian religion. A doctor of the Sorbonne drew further attention to the fact that the name Mahomet had three syllables, exactly like the name Jesus Christ.

Mahomet was performed for the first time August

19, 1742. The sophisticated first-night audience received it splendidly, but after the third performance the many and loud protests forced the author to withdraw his play. At the same time a pirated edition of his writings was put on the market, the last volume of which contained not only libels on prominent men with whom Voltaire wanted to be on good terms, but also the most abusive attacks upon himself and Madame du Châtelet.

The booksellers divided the stock to dispose of it more rapidly, when they heard that Voltaire had asked Maurepas to have the unauthorized edition condemned. Voltaire learned that Didot and Barrois were the last to have it on hand; he wrote a friendly letter to Didot offering to buy the whole edition. In the meantime the two booksellers were arrested and taken to Fort-L'Evèque. Public opinion took the part of the booksellers against Voltaire. Eighteenth century conception of jurisprudence is strikingly illustrated in the following incident: The Duke of Bethune wrote to the police commissioner of Paris requesting that Barrois should be freed, as he needed him to catalogue and inventory his books for an auction:

"Monsieur, I hear that a Parisian bookseller by the name of Barrois is in prison on your order. If you could dismiss the case against him by Sunday night you would oblige me very much. He took care of the books of my late uncle and made the catalogue. The sale has been announced for Monday, the seventh; it is impossible to do anything in his absence; I hope you will be so good as to grant the favor I ask of you."

The booksellers had no sooner been freed than they began again to sell the fifth volume which, under Voltaire's name, libelled himself and his friend. They were put into prison a second time and sentenced to close their shops. But as they had powerful protectors they were again freed without a fine.

On February 20, 1743, *Mérope* was played for the first time. *Mérope* is a play whose peculiar fascination the modern reader can imagine if he has read Henrik Ibsen's *Lady Inger of Ostrat*. The play was declined by the actors, at first, because it contained nothing about love. The Abbé Voisenon, to whom Voltaire read it, and who had great influence at the theater, was unrestrained in his enthusiasm. He hurried over to the Comédie Française and made the actors change their minds.

At the first performance the audience was so carried away that it seemed drunk with enthusiasm. The applause was endless, and for the first time in the history of the theater the spectators demanded to see the author of the play on the stage. The Duchess de Boufflers and the Duchess de Luxembourg did everything in their power to induce the poet to obey the wish of the audience. He showed himself, and after kissing the hand of the Duchess de Luxembourg he retired from her loge. This was the description of the *Journal de Paris,* which is dependable. What Voltaire himself wrote thirty years later about this evening, in his *Commentaire historique,* is confused with the first performance of *Œdipe.*

Today curtain calls of the author are such usual occurrences that they are not noticed. But at that time it was a revolutionary thing. Lessing wrote, twenty-four years later:

"*Mérope* called forth the wildest applause, and the parterre gave the poet such an ovation as had never before been recorded. . . . The audience wished to see in person the playwright whose work it so admired; when the performance was over, they demanded to see him, called and shouted until Monsieur de Voltaire must needs come out and let himself be stared at and applauded. I don't know which would have been stranger to me: the childish curiosity of the audience or the vain complacency of the poet. How does one fancy a poet looks? . . . And how weak must be the impression made by a work of art, when one is anxious to compare it with the figure of its creator. The true masterpiece, it seems to me, must fill us so completely that we forget its creator; that we do not regard it as a product of a single individual, but of Nature in general. . . . For, when the Parisian parterre saw how easily a Voltaire could be baited into this trap, how tame and pliable a man could become by its ambiguous caresses, it afforded itself this pleasure more often, and henceforth a new play was seldom performed, without its author's being asked to perform too, and most of them were fatuous enough to do it. From Voltaire to Marmontel . . . nearly all have stood in this pillory."

The eighty-six-year-old Fontenelle, wishing to make it appear that Voltaire owed this triumph to the acting, commented that "The performance of *Mérope* did great honor to Voltaire; on reading the play, one is forced to conclude that it did still greater honor to Mademoiselle Dumesnil."

3

In the first part of April, 1744, Voltaire and Emily du Châtelet returned to Cirey, and both were happy to be there again. "Cirey is delightful, it is a jewel," wrote Voltaire to d'Argenson. And a few days later he dated a letter to d'Argental: "In Cirey, in Happy-Land." President Hénault, who visited the couple in their country home, was much impressed by their happiness. He wrote in his *Memoirs*: "I found them alone. As a third there was only a monk of the order of the Minorites, a great geometrician and professor of philosophy in Rome. Visualize a delightful refuge, of peace, tranquillity, harmony, charm, talent, and mutual respect, a place in which the seriousness of philosophy is combined with the beauty of poetry, and you will have pictured Cirey." The monk mentioned by the President was Père François Jacquier, who in the previous year had published a book, *Isaac Newton's Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy.*

But again the stay in Cirey could not be long. Richelieu had given Voltaire a commission which occupied his mind to the exclusion of all else, and which necessitated his presence in Versailles. Louis XV had assigned to Richelieu, his first chamberlain, the arrangements for the festivals which were to celebrate the marriage of the Dauphin with the Infanta Marie Therese of Spain. And Richelieu, in turn, had asked Voltaire to write a suitable play for the occasion. The poet, who was anxious to win the favor of the King and the Court spent—like Molière before him, and Goethe after him—a disproportionate amount of time on this task.

He turned out *The Princess of Navarre* and spent no less than ten months on the revisions and alterations which were demanded, first by the criticisms of d'Argental and Richelieu, then by the whims of the composer Rameau. Rameau was used to behaving despotically toward the little librettists who provided him with texts; now he demanded that Voltaire should reduce to four lines what he had put in eight, and expand to eight lines what he had expressed in four. Hénault writes from Plombières to Count d'Argenson: "What do you say about Rameau who is beginning to correct verses by Voltaire!"

Richelieu tried, diplomatically but firmly, to induce the eccentric composer to relax his demands; and finally he succeeded.

Neither Voltaire nor the Marquise felt like leaving Cirey at a time when they were so comfortable. But Richelieu thought Voltaire's presence essential. So they left Champagne and arrived in Paris in the midst of the city's celebration, with feasts and fireworks, of the King's recovery from the illness in Metz which had almost cost him his life, and the consequences of which had been fatal to the Duchess de Châteauroux.

Near the Hotel de Charost, where the Marquise wanted to stop, more than two thousand vehicles moved in three rows, until none could go forward or backward, because every street was blocked, while the crowd clamored and shouted. The Marquise's first thought was that she must spend the night in her coach without sleep or food. Then she thought of seeking refuge in the residence of President Hénault in the Place Vendôme. The President himself was in Versailles. She and Voltaire went there on foot, sent to the nearest restaurant for supper, and drank the President's health in his own wine.

From the middle of September until the end of the year the couple remained in Paris, where social life and one poem, *Sur les Evénements de 1744*, took up all Voltaire's time.

In the beginning of January he went to Versailles to attend the rehearsals of his play and to direct the decorators, musicians, singers and dancers; for everything in the way of scenic splendor and variety was brought into use for this occasion. His problem in the *Princess of Navarre,* as he wrote in a letter to Cideville, was to "praise the King in the most extravagant key, to laud the Dauphin superlatively, to handle the Royal Family with kid gloves, to satisfy the Court and not to displease Paris." He hoped in the end to win some sort of official recognition as his reward. He had done without such recognition for a long time, and he felt that the lack of it made his position not only insecure but even perilous.

Voltaire had tried to blend speech, song, dance, comedy, tragedy, opera, and ballet into one harmonious whole. This play is by no means to be compared with Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *The Tempest.* But it does rank with the festival plays written by Molière for the Court at Versailles and by Goethe for the Court at Weimar.

Familiar as Voltaire was with Court life, he did not always succeed in avoiding things considered offensive. The code of etiquette was too strict and too elaborate. A certain line was considered to be in scandalously bad form. Originally it read:

> Vos suivantes et vos dames du palais.

To mention the female attendants before the ladies-in-waiting!—The line was changed to read:

> Vos premiers officiers, vos dames du palais.

When a few days later *Theseus* was played before the Infanta, she remarked: "This is probably not written by the same person who wrote the text to that ballet of the other day, for that seemed to me to contain a great many flat jokes and vulgar expressions."

But Voltaire had fulfilled his obligations as the national poet and as a courtier, and he had not long to wait for his reward. He was promised the position of "*gentilhomme ordinaire de Sa Majesté*" at the first possible occasion, and was immediately given the title and salary of Royal Historian. The appointment was worded thus:

"Versailles, April 1st, 1745. In considering the awards by which His Majesty contributes to the advancement of literature, the King has today found no one more worthy to receive proof of His favor and to be distinguished by a title of honor, than the Sieur Arouet de Voltaire, who has made in every science he has undertaken the most rapid progress, the fruits of which are his writings, which have found well-deserved approval."

He was appointed Historian with an annual salary of two thousand livres. Satisfied as Voltaire doubtless was with the advantages attained, it seemed to him odd that he should owe them to this puny, little, made-to-order fantasy, and he wrote the oft-quoted epigram:

> Mon *Henri, quatre* et ma *Zaïre*
> Et mon Americaine *Alzire*
> Ne m'ont valu jamais un seul regard du roi.
> J'eus beaucoup d'ennemis avec très peu de gloire;
> Les honneurs et les biens pleuvent enfin sur moi
> Pour une farce de la foire.

He had won because Madame de Pompadour liked him. But he was mistaken if he imagined that he enjoyed the favor of the King.

4

Voltaire had indeed come into closer touch with the King and Court. He was given the task of sketching Louis XV's letter to Elisabeth of Russia, who had offered to act as a mediator of peace. Soon after the French troops won the victory of Fontenoy under the eyes of the King. Voltaire was one of the first to learn of it, as d'Argenson, his old school comrade, sent him a messenger with the news and asked for an ode to commemorate the victory. Voltaire answered enthusiastically: "It is three hundred years since a King of France has done anything so glorious."

The problem was difficult. Everyone who had distinguished himself or was in any other way concerned in the battle, wished to be mentioned. The victory was won on May 11, 1745. The news reached Paris on May 14. The approval of Voltaire's ode by the censor is dated May 17. One can see with what speed he did his work. When details came in, the ode grew. In each new edition it had to be expanded, and the editions succeeded one another with great speed. In a letter to d'Argenson Voltaire asks him to draw the King's attention to the fact that in ten days five editions had been published to his glory. In one of the later editions the poem was dedicated to Louis, whom it praises immoderately, but perfunctorily, as a hero. The poem is lively and dramatic, but official; executed to order but executed with honest enthusiasm.

Two matters still weighed on Voltaire's mind: that the performances of *Mahomet* had been interrupted, and that he was not a member of the Académie Française. For the present *Mahomet* was his primary interest. He considered what would be his most effective defense against the accusation that the play was an attack, by way of Islam, upon Christianity. He concluded that nothing would have a better effect than to induce the Holy Father to accept the dedication of the tragedy. If the Pope was not offended by the play, the petty churchmen would only be making themselves ridiculous by continuing their indignation.

At first he tried to induce the Minister of Foreign Affairs, d'Argenson, to have the French Ambassador to Rome, the Abbé de Canillac, take up the matter. D'Argenson showed no inclination to ask any such favor of Canillac. But Voltaire had other arrows to his bow. Madame du Châtelet was friendly with Mademoiselle du Thil, who in turn was well acquainted with an Abbé de Tolignan, who had access to the Pope. A copy of *Mahomet* was given to Benedict XIV by him in the name of the poet, with the dedication and the petition to His Holiness to be so gracious as to give to Voltaire a few medallions and his portrait as a reward. The Abbé also handed the Pope an extract Voltaire had made from the Papal writings, as Lambertinus, the Pope, had written no less than fifteen folio volumes, accompanied by a little inscription to go under the Pope's portrait:

> Lambertinus hic est, Romæ decus et pater orbis,
> Qui mundum scriptis docuit, virtutibus ornat.

The Pope gave the Abbé de Tolignan two medallions for Voltaire and gladly accepted the dedication. This read, in the poet's best Italian:

"Holy Father,

"Your Holiness will excuse the liberty taken by one of the most insignificant yet most devoted admirers of spiritual nobility, in dedicating to the Overlord of the True Religion a work written against the founder of a false and barbaric creed.

"To whom could I better dedicate this satire on the cruelty and the errors of a false prophet, than to the representative and successor of a God of Peace and Truth?

"With Your Holiness' permission I lay at Your feet the work and the author. I make bold to ask Your protection for the work, Your blessing for its creator. With this feeling of deep devotion I kiss Your Holy foot.

"Paris, August 17, 1745."

The Pope answered, with ecclesiastical finesse and cleverness, thus:

"Pope Benedict XIV to his beloved son.
"Greetings and Apostolic blessing.

"Several weeks ago We were brought your admirable tragedy *Mahomet* which We read with great pleasure. Thereafter the Cardinal Passionei delivered to Us in your name the splendid ode on Fontenoy. Signor Leprotti conveyed to Us your letter of August 17. Each of these proofs of good will deserves a special acknowledgment. But We combine them all and send you the thanks due to so many proofs of unusual friendship for Us, with the assurance of Our respect for merits which are so outstanding as yours.

"When your inscription was published in Rome We were informed that one of your countrymen, a man of letters who was stopping here, remarked at a social gathering that the first line contained an error, as you had treated the word *hic* as short, whereas it should always be long.

"We replied that he was mistaken, and that the vowel was short or long, according to the poet's preference. Vergil used it as short in the line:

Solus hic inflexit sensus, animumque labantem (Aen. IV 22)

but as long in another line:

Hic finis Priami fatorum, hic exitus illum (Aen. II 554).

"This seems to Us very well answered by a man who has not read Vergil for more than fifty years. Although you yourself are the party concerned in this matter, Our opinion of your honesty and truthfulness is so favorable that We appoint you judge in the difference between Us and your critic. There only remains to grant you Our Apostolic blessing.

"Dated in Rome in Sante Maria Maggiore, September 19, 1745, in the sixth year of Our Pontificate."

It was Voltaire's hope to persuade Louis XV that he was really an obedient son of the Church.

5

The reader will have noticed how cleverly and carefully Benedict XIV avoided any discussion of the literary contents of the French comedy. He restricted himself to a polite commendation of Voltaire's Latin metrics.

Frederick seemed to be the born protector for Voltaire's *Mahomet.* Hence Voltaire's long letter to Frederick, dated December, 1740, which was not meant to be a private letter. In it he points out the value of considering in history those ancient criminals, the famous originators of superstition and fanaticism, who were the first to persecute those who refused to become their followers. There is no need to think, he says, that such crimes are things of the past, or that the fire of the religious wars is extinguished. To believe this is to delude oneself with too high an opinion of human nature. He cites many facts in proof of his statements.

What advantage is it to mankind to learn of the passions and misfortunes of a hero of antiquity, if it is not taught by them? The theater should instruct and warn. The stage is the most powerful rival of the pulpit.

In other words, the theater under Voltaire's hands became a counter-church.

6

As soon as Voltaire heard of the victory of Fontenoy, he wrote the following verse and sent it to the lady whom it compliments:

Quand Louis, ce héros charmant
Dont tout Paris fait son idole,
Gagne quelque combat brillant,
On doit en faire compliment
A la divine Etioles;

The unheard-of had come to pass, and though it left the state unshaken it caused the Court to rock on its foundations. A lady who was not, like all previous favorites, descended from the nobility, but from the aristocracy of finance, had taken a place beside the King.

Jeanne Antoinette Poisson was born in Paris on December 29, 1721. She grew up pretty and talented, but with one thing against her: her descent. Monsieur Poisson, her putative father, had supplied provisions to the army, but had performed this business with such dishonesty that he was sentenced to be hanged; he therefore disappeared for some time to Hamburg. Her mother, Louise Madeleine de la Matte, was loved and supported first by a Secretary of State, then by an Ambassador. At the time her daughter was born she was on intimate terms with General Le Narmant de Tournehem, who provided an excellent education for the young girl.

Under Jeliotte she learned to sing and to play the piano; under Guibaudet to dance. She sang like an opera singer and danced with the professional skill of a ballet dancer. Crébillon, as a friend of the family, instructed her in the art of reciting verses and brought out her talent as an actress. Crébillon's friends taught her the sophistication of the age, the art of expressing her feelings roguishly and her thoughts ironically. Her horsemanship was unequaled. No one else could arouse such a storm of applause by a song or by playing the piano. None could compete with her in imitating the most popular actresses in their mannerisms and speech. No one told an anecdote with greater subtlety and wit.

No one knew better than she how to dress herself. Not only did she know how to wear her clothes in such a way as to bring out every superiority of her figure, but she could adorn herself with anything she took into her hands, a band, a scarf, a piece of material, so that at once it became attractive, and she with it. She had the female genius which gives a personality to every style, and every rag that she put onto her body she wore with individuality.

She was skilful in drawing and etching. This marvellous combination of talents made an impression upon women as well as upon men. We therefore see her in touch with two of the five sisters who preceded her as favorites of the King. One evening Madame de Mailly, after Mademoiselle Poisson had played a piece on the piano, embraced her enthusiastically. Some time later, after her marriage, when the Duchess de Chevreuse spoke enthusiastically to Louis XV about "the little d'Etioles," the Duchess de Châteauroux approached her quietly and stepped so hard on her foot that she was made sick. The next day Madame de Châteauroux paid a visit to the Duchess to apologize for her clumsiness, and in the course of the conversation she let drop the words: "Do you know that the talk is of giving the little d'Etioles to the King, and that all that is waited for is a way in which to do it?" At the same time she ordered her prospective rival to keep away from the woods in which the King went hunting.

Madame d'Etioles, although she was young and unknown, made so strong an impression upon experienced connoisseurs, such as President Hénault, that, after having met the young lady at a soiree, he wrote in 1742 to Madame du Deffand: "I met there one of the prettiest women I ever saw. She knows much about music; she sings with animation and with perfect taste; she knows a hundred songs; she plays comedy in Etioles on a stage which is as good as our Opéra and which boasts all mechanical facilities for shifting scenes."

Among her many admirers her mother's lover chose for her his nephew, who was very rich. In March, 1741, she was married to Charles Guillaume le Normant, *seigneur d'Etioles, chevalier d'honneur du présidial de Blois.* Her husband, scarcely twenty-four years old, was an ugly little runt; his passion left her cold; she saw in him only a means for social advancement.

7

She was dazzlingly pretty. Her skin was incomparably white; her face was a perfect oval, the lips somewhat pale, the great eyes of an undefinable color—in one of the two portraits of her in the Louvre, they are blue, in the other, brown; but under their lovely, dark brows these eyes enchanted him who had a weakness for blue eyes, as well as him for whom brown eyes were irresistible. She had wonderful light brown hair, the prettiest teeth, and two dimples in her cheeks. She was of medium height, slender, lithe and dainty; her hands were exquisite, her movements animated and occasionally passionate. But the greatest charm of her face was the continuous change of expression, now gay, now dignified, always charming.

Her mother's lover deeded half of his property to the young couple at once, the other half by will in the event of his death. The young beauty installed herself in luxury at Etioles and invited there the friends of her father's house, among them Fontenelle, Abbé de Bernis, Cardinal Maupertuis and Voltaire, who later recalled many a glass of Tokay wine that had been served him at Etioles.

In the accounts which Madame de Pompadour kept there is an item which reveals what, under the influence of her mother's hopes during her early youth, had become an obsession: "600 livres to Madame Lebon, because she prophesied to me when I was only nineteen that I would one day become the King's mistress." Superstitious as she was she had clung with fervent ambition to this prophecy and had been encouraged when she heard friends call her with cynical flattery *un morceau de roi.*

Since the death of the Duchess de Châteauroux, the King's bed had been a lonesome place. The Queen spent all her time in piety and good deeds. For relaxation she permitted herself only the modest suppers with the Duke and Duchess de Luynes, where the company was always the same. The principal guests were the brother of the Duchess, the Cardinal de Luynes, President Hénault, and the Duke and Duchess de Chevreuse. The Duke de Chevreuse to everybody's delighted amusement was platonically in love with the Queen and jealous of Hénault, with whom Marie Leszczynska liked to talk.

At first these evening parties had been the bright spots in the Queen's monotonous life; by and by they grew boring by repetition. Sometimes the Duchess de Luynes' old dog Tintamarre snored so loudly that he awakened the Cardinal. Then the latter started up with such a comic movement or with such an absent-minded expression that the old and tired company had to smile.

The King had consoled himself with occasional women, but he was at the point where he had had enough of these flirtations and wished a steady mistress. Richelieu was attached to Madame de la Popelinière, whose lover he had become after climbing up through the chimney. He vainly offered the King this lady, the former opera singer Deshayes, whom he loved with the most touching passion. The King had refused to accept this generous self-sacrifice. Madame d'Etioles had long been scheming to attract Louis' attention. She appeared in Senart Forest, where the royal hunts took place, in the most charming costumes, and in her little coach drove constantly between the horses and dogs so that the King was forced to notice her. The great masquerade ball, which was given in February, 1745, on the occasion of the wedding of the Dauphin, gave Madame d'Etioles her chance to approach the King. The acquaintance was made and on the following day she dined with the King in Versailles.

Madame de Tencin and her brother, the Cardinal, tried to ingratiate themselves with her as they had previously with Madame de Châteauroux. They gave the young lady good advice and all sorts of warnings. The Bishop de Mirepoix, on the other hand, whom Voltaire had subjected to the ridicule of the King of Prussia and of all Europe, and who kept his powerful position at Court as the teacher of the Dauphin, strenuously opposed the new favorite, and emphasized what a bad precedent would be set if a woman who had lived in the worst company and who had had social intercourse with Fontenelle, Maupertuis, and even with Voltaire, should be elevated to the position of *maîtresse en titre*. But the opposition of Mirepoix had as result that those among the King's confidants who were opposed to the dull and pious party, protected the young lady and incited Louis XV to assert himself against ecclesiastical guardianship.

Her relations with the King had scarcely been confirmed when she told him of her fear, more pretended than real, of what her husband might plot in his jealousy. Thus she induced Louis to give her Madame de Mailly's former apartment in Versailles, where no Othello could find and throttle her. Moreover she got the King to promise her his protection against the Dauphin, and to give her the promise of an estate. When, in May, Louis went to the army in Flanders she completed her conquest by securing the King's promise that she should become *maîtresse declarée* upon his return.

8

By the beginning of July she was able to show her friends no less than eighty letters sent her by the King during the preceding two months. Not content to rely on her own letter-writing, she had the skilled young Abbé de Bernis write the most flattering, loving, and intelligent letters which she then copied in her own hand as answers. One of the King's last letters to her was addressed: "A la Marquise de Pompadour" and contained the document which granted her this title. Voltaire, who this summer was making a visit of several months at Etioles, wrote on this occasion the stanzas the first of which reads:

Il sait aimer, il sait combattre,
Il envoie en ce beau séjour
Un brevet digne d'Henri Quatre,
Signé LOUIS, Mars et l'Amour.

One evening after she had played a rôle in Versailles in *Les Petits Appartements* he wrote the following verses:

Ainsi donc vous réunissez
Tous les Arts, tous les goûts, tous les talents de plaire:
Pompadour, vous embellissez
La cour, le Parnasse, et Cythère.
Charme de tous les cœurs, trésor d'un seul mortel,
Qu'un sort si beau soit eternel!
Que vos jours précieux soient marqués par des fêtes!
Que la paix dans nos champs revienne avec Louis!
Soyex tous deux sans ennemis,
Et tous deux gardez vos conquêtes!

The Marquise was surely not without enemies at Court. Every phrase she used that revealed her lack of noble breeding was ridiculed. It cannot be denied that, just when she wanted to display her *savoir faire,* she was occasionally very unlucky. One day she called the Duke of Chaulnes "mon cochon!" No matter how many advantages she might possess she had not noble blood, and that the Court could never excuse. She was a bourgeois not by birth only but also in thought, and she loved the King sentimentally. Naïvely she proposed to the King a marriage be-

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tween a son who resembled him very closely and whom he had had by Madame de Vintimille, and her daughter Alexandrine whom she had by her marriage with Monsieur d'Etioles. She wished that the King's blood and her own might mix, and she was moved at the thought of herself as a grandmother. The King rejected with disgust the notion of seeing his Bourbon blood mixed with bourgeois stock, and shortly afterward Alexandrine died.

Madame de Pompadour was also plebeian in the show of modesty which she made in her relations with the King; she took an attitude which was ridiculed by the Court as the behavior of a grisette, and which was glorified as chastity by the poets.

To the bourgeois in her nature belonged her desire not only not to offend the Queen but even to gain her favor, and to use her own power to improve the position of the legitimate wife.

Her presentation to the Queen took place in Versailles on September 14, 1745. She came straight from a presentation to the King, which had taken place in the anteroom. In the rooms of the Queen the suspense was awful. Would the Queen be gracious or would she be cold? The Queen, with whom long diplomatic negotiations had been carried on in advance, behaved very graciously, and asked after the only lady of the higher aristocracy with whom Madame de Pompadour was intimate. "Do tell me, how is Madame de Saissac? I have had the pleasure of seeing her several times in Paris." Moved by so much kindness Madame de Pompadour stammered: "Madame, I have a real passion to please you, if it is possible."

To convince the Queen of her sincerity and to find an excuse for renewed assurance of her devotion, the favorite acted as though she had noted signs of coolness in the Queen's attitude. She confided this to the Duchess de Luynes who quickly brought her word from Maria Leszczynska. "that the Queen had nothing against her, on the contrary acknowledged her anxiety to please her on every occasion."

This induced Madame de Pompadour to write the Duchess a long letter, which was to be read by the

Queen. In it she expresses her devotion with bourgeois sincerity and humility, and also describes her struggle against the general opposition of the Court. The letter begins:

"You restore me to life, Madame la Duchesse; I have spent the last three days in a perfect torment, as you will easily believe, you who know so well my devotion to the Queen. I have been most horribly slandered to the Dauphin and to the Dauphine you were good enough to explain the falsity of these abominations of which I was accused. A few days before that I was told that the Queen, too, had been turned against me. Judge for yourself my despair! The Queen turned against me, who would lay down my life for her, me, to whom her favor becomes more precious every day!"

Madame de Pompadour denied the truth of all the slanders against the Queen that were brought to the King's ears in a continuous stream. She induced him to sit down now and then for a few minutes at the Queen's card table, to invite her to Choisi for lunch, even persuaded him on January 1, 1746, for the first time in years, to give the Queen a New Year's gift, a gold tobacco case in which was set a small watch, a gift which was originally meant for the recently deceased mother of the Marquise.

It is true that the Dauphin, the Dauphine and their bigoted following showed the favorite nothing but icy indifference. When they sat with her in the King's coach none of them spoke a word except in answer to a direct question. Richelieu treated her rudely at first. If the King did not want to have an affair with Madame de Popelinière, there were still his two nieces, Madame de Flavacourt to whom Louis previously had been attracted, and Madame de Lauraguais, whom he had found so entertaining and who with her sarcastic wit made the Marquise of Pompadour her butt. What better object of ridicule could she find than a common woman who wanted to raise herself by a union with a King!

But in a short time a reconciliation took place between the Marquise and Richelieu.

Before long, Versailles was backed in its hatred by the laughter loving and malicious city of Paris, which greeted all provoking occurrences at Court with a flock of epigrams, lampoons and scurrilous ballads.

It was Maurepas who secretly opened the floodgates and let mockery and sarcasm from his own pen mix with the stream of libelous songs which were given the name poissonades.

9

The best thing for the favorite to do was to form a small but dependable circle of her own in this Court which was so opposed to her. As a nucleus she had Madame de Tencin and her brother, invaluable advisers, the aged Princess of Conti whose extravagances kept her so overwhelmingly in debt that she was willing to make any concessions, the young Prince of Conti to whom she promised that she would further his marriage prospects with the Princess Adelaide, and who offered to ally himself with her out of jealousy of the houses of Condé and Orléans. Then she had on her side a diplomat, Monsieur de Saint-Severin; by flattery she won over two Marshals, Noailles and Belle-Isle; and finally, the Marquis de Pusieux, through whose hands all intercepted letters passed, and with whose assistance she could be assured that the King would find nothing in his mail that attacked her.

When she was still Madame d'Etioles she had known the powerful brothers Pâris. One could not have better support than those men in whose hands were the finances of France, when one was intimately connected with a King who was constantly in financial difficulties.

It was Madame de Pompadour's problem to make it clear to Louis how these men with their wealth of ideas could provide him with the money he needed to carry on a war. She supported their daring and fantastic financial schemes which always aimed at the destruction of Austria or Holland or some other power, and allowed the public debt to grow unheeded, allowed the provinces to be drained, so long as sufficient money was left for the King and for Versailles.

But her primary aim was to win the King entirely and to make herself indispensable to him. In this she proved herself a genius at the art of love. She learned that the innermost point of the King's nature was a black melancholia, which had to be diverted at every moment, which found its outlet in an obsession for talk about death and funerals.

The King was bored, that was the pith of the matter, he was suffering the unutterable boredom of one whom a surfeit of dissipation has left spent and listless. Here the Marquise interfered, with a tact which never erred, with a deep understanding of what this little man was suffering with a perfect sympathy.

It was impossible for him to be bored in her proximity, for she possessed the genius of being always new. Her beauty renewed, changed, multiplied by her ability of dressing and adorning herself. Her attraction remained ever fresh, because her behavior, her speech, her movements, her caresses were so varied that everything was a surprise, nothing became a habit. When the King in his listlessness and world-weariness was ill-humored, like a seductive good angel, she brought him forgetfulness in one hand, and enjoyment in the other.

What he needed for his inner emptiness was recreation, and she furnished him a thousand little occupations and let him undertake brief journeys. She locked his door when the ministers came to work with him. She hid him in her apartment in Fontainebleau or Choisi or Versailles, when the foreign Ambassadors sought an audience wherewith to bore him, who was bored anyhow. She sang to him; played to him; told him entertaining stories.

Like Scheherazade, Madame de Pompadour prolonged her existence by giving the King a thousand and one nights, and then another thousand.

When the King in his fear of Hell suffered an access of religion the Marquise knew how to make even religion enjoyable. She made religious musical feasts for him, gave church concerts in her apartments, and chorals in which she was the soloist, accompanied by the loveliest voices which could be found among the ladies and gentlemen of the Court.

When the King felt ill-humored either because of remorse or because of the lurking ennui, she made him a spectator of theatrical performances which she arranged and in which she herself played the leading rôles.

The King was easily persuaded to have one of the wide galleries of the castle converted into a theater; for Richelieu, now reconciled with the Marquise whom he had seen play comedy at Chantemerle, and the Dukes of Nivernois and of Duras, who had played with her there, constantly spoke to the King of the dramatic talents of his mistress, which she had not so far had any occasion to display to him.

The theater was named *Le Théâtre des Petits Appartements,* and three steps from the sanctimonious Court of the Dauphin, Madame de Pompadour boldly staged *Tartuffe,* and had the satisfaction of knowing that the Dauphin's courtiers were chagrinned at not being allowed to take part in or to attend the play. After one of these performances in which Madame de Pompadour scored an unusual success, King Louis said to her aloud: "You are the most charming woman in France."

The effort to fascinate the King by constant variety accounts for the number of estates Madame de Pompadour acquired.

There was, for instance, Crécy. It contained a gorgeous apartment for the King, with a banquet hall forty-nine feet long, as well as a small apartment for herself and a park with terraces which permitted a view of the valley of the Blaise River as far as the green mountains. There was the little Château la Celle which she had bought from the King's chamberlain, Bachélier. Here were three large terraces between groves formed like arcades. The canal, with the royal barge, was surrounded by a fence festooned with red and yellow hollyhocks, which reflected in the water. At one evening banquet everything was illuminated by little lights: the canal, gondolas, the two groves. At the last course the hostess, dressed as Night, cried out "Come, come, follow me, all of you!" Whereupon everybody went to one of the groves where a children's ballet was performed and a chorus was sung. A courtier recited a poem of praise to the King. All were in dominoes and masks and scattered in the clear night through the park—a lively picture by Fragonard.

The Marquise had tiny castles built in the woods. These were called "Hermitages." There were three, l'Hermitage in Compiègne, the one in Versailles, and the one in Fontainebleau. Madame de Pompadour, not content with her residence of the Hôtel Pontchartrain in Paris, moved to the palace of the Count d'Evreux in the Faubourg St. Honoré and had it decorated with rare furniture and Gobelin tapestries.

The most magnificent example of the fertile imagination and exquisite taste of the Marquise was the Château Bellevue, which she had erected on the banks of the Seine at a spot which moved her by its natural beauty. She sat on a seat of stone and grass and sketched for the two architects she had asked to come, the buildings as she visualized them, the gardens as she wished them. Ground was broken June, 1748; in November, 1750, the castle was opened.

The thirty-six millions of francs which Madame de Pompadour spent in twenty years went to an army of sculptors, painters, marble-workers, gilders, bronze-moulders, porcelain-workers and gardeners. In the anteroom of Bellevue stood two statues, one by Falconnet, the other by Adam. The dining-room was painted by Oudry, the wood-carvings were done by Verbreck. Vanloo painted one set of walls and Saly chiseled the statue of Amor which adorned the gallery of the music hall.

Alarmed at the apparently unlimited power of Madame de Pompadour, Maurepas could no longer restrain himself. With his capacity for making the business of government entertaining for the King, with his dependable memory, his great knowledge of people and of conditions in the state, he considered himself indispensable and thought he could dare anything.

The Marquise asked him whether he thought he could track down the author of the songs against her. He answered: "As soon as I find him, I shall report him to the King." And when she said: "You don't pay any especial attention to the King's mistresses, do you?" he answered with calm effrontery: "I have always respected them, whether they deserved it or not."

On a journey to Celle the favorite succeeded, by using all kinds of tricks—by stating that Maurepas was conspiring with the Dauphin against the King, by describing her fear of being poisoned by him "like the Duchess of Châteauroux"—in effecting the dismissal and disgrace of the Minister. Two hours after this had been decided. Maurepas was awakened from sleep by this message:

"I promised I would let you know in advance; I am keeping my word. I am no longer pleased with your services. You will submit your resignation to Monsieur de Saint-Florentin. You will go to Bourges. Pontchartrain is too near. I give you the rest of the week to prepare for the journey. You are not to try to see your family. You are not to send me any reply.

Louis."

Madame de Pompadour was made a duchess.

10

The Duchess had the ambition to attach men of letters and science to herself and to the Court in order to make the age of Louis XV at least as famous as that of Louis XIV.

Voltaire was her favorite author. Her influence had obtained for him the commission to write his *Princesse de Navarre,* and he owed to her his appointment as *historiographe de France,* and the title of *gentilhomme ordinaire de la chambre,* which pleased him so much that he retained it when several years later he ipso facto renounced the office by his journey to Prussia.

Voltaire writes of her in the *Précis du siècle de Louis Quinze:* "Europe dates its good fortune from the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. One will be surprised to learn that this peace was the fruit of emphatic advice given by a young lady of high standing, famous for her beauty and charm, rare talents, intellect, and of an envied position."

He dedicated his *Tancrède* to her, with gratitude for her intellectual interests, but with some unfortunate lines. He wrote: "Since your childhood I have seen your charm and your many talents develop; I have at all times received proofs of your kindness. If any censor were to disapprove of the homage which I pay you, it could be only one who was born with an ungrateful heart; I owe you much, Madame, and I must say so. I dare still more; I dare to thank you publicly for the kindness you have shown to a great number of real writers, great artists, men with merits in more than one line."

Madame de Pompadour's lady-in-waiting, Madame de Hausset, says in her memoirs that a letter of the Marquise takes exception to the sentence: "If any censor were to disapprove of the homage which I pay you," etc., and that it seemed to Madame de Pompadour that Voltaire meant that he was dedicating the tragedy to a lady whom the public considered unchaste. She therefore took it very amiss.

On this occasion as on several others, Voltaire, who was never impolite to anyone else, treated Madame de Pompadour tactlessly.

The Marquise conferred many favors upon Buffon, although he was one of the Queen's followers, and remained so until his death. But she was not pleased when he wrote: "The physical is the only thing that matters in love." She referred to this when, one day at Marly Park, she tapped him with her fan and said: "You surely are a nice person!"

Even such a Puritan as Montesquieu had no scruples about coming to her for help, indeed in a matter which was not exactly to his credit. When he learned that General Dupin was working on a refutation of his work *L'Esprit des Louis,* he prevailed upon Madame de Pompadour to use her influence to have this criticism suppressed.

Marmontel was her especial favorite and protégé. She worked with him on two of his tragedies; and when both of them proved failures, she was as warm to him as before. He served a sentence in the Bastille because of a satire against the Duke d'Aumont, but nevertheless, she smoothed his way into the French Academy by influencing Louis XV.

She took an interest in the dour and reserved Jean Jacques Rousseau, as well as in the writers who tried to curry favor with her. She ordered his *Le Devin de Village* to be performed in Fontainebleau; later she herself played in this in man's attire. She would have presented Rousseau to the King and procured him an annual income, had his shyness not prevented.

The King of Prussia had issued a grant "to the sublime genius" D'Alembert, entitling him to a pension of 1200 livres—a stingy enough allowance to be given with such a grandiloquent air. When King Louis decided to supplement it, Madame de Pompadour advised the King to forbid D'Alembert to continue to accept the contribution of the Prussian King, and to give him double the sum from his own purse. Louis, however, did not dare to do so for fear God might not like it because of D'Alembert's contribution to the *Encyclopedia!*

In Voltaire's *Mélanges,* under the title *de L'Encyclopédie,* there is an anecdote describing Madame de Pompadour's efforts to obtain the release of the great work of D'Alembert and Diderot.

One evening at the table of Louis XV at the Trianon, the conversation turned from hunting to the question of the composition of gunpowder. One of those present thought that it consisted of equal parts of salpetre, sulphur and coal. The Duke de La Vallière stated the correct formula. The Duke de Nivernois enlarged upon how wrong it was that those present knew so little about the composition of a material with which they killed and were killed. Then Madame de Pompadour said: "There is absolutely nothing of which we have a correct conception; I don't even know how the rouge I apply to my cheeks is made, or the silk hose I wear on my legs." "That," said the Duke de La Vallière, "is because Your Majesty had our *Encyclopedia* confiscated, after we had subscribed hundreds of francs for it." The

King replied that he had been warned of the dangerous contents of the volumes which were on the dressing-tables of all the ladies.

Nevertheless, servants were ordered to fetch the ponderous tomes that comprised the *Encyclopedia*. The company found in it a complete exposition of the manufacture of powder, and of ancient and modern cosmetics, and the Marquise exclaimed: "So, Sire! You have confiscated this prodigious source of useful information in order to possess it alone and to be the only scholar in Your Kingdom?" The Duke de Cocigny said: "Sire, You are lucky enough to possess in your kingdom, people who have all kinds of knowledge to pass on to posterity. We find everything in here, from the way a needle is made to the method of casting a cannon, from the most insignificant to the most colossal problems. And yet, now, the *Encyclopedia* is available only to foreigners. Take everything I have, Sire, if You wish to, but give me back my *Encyclopedia.*

The King answered that many mistakes could be found in the work, excellent as it was; the Count replied adroitly with the comment that two ragouts of the King's supper had come out rather poorly; but this did not spoil the other courses, which had been excellent.

Posterity has Madame de Pompadour to thank for two great institutions. One is the porcelain works in Sèvres, which creates in fragile material a form of French elegance which has survived not only Louis XV, but all his royal line. The Marquise proved to the King that France paid to China and to Saxony, a half million livres yearly for porcelain which could be manufactured in France. She persevered until the factory was an accomplished fact. The other institution of which she was the founder is the military school for the sons of officers who died in active service.

11

To commemorate the victory of Fontenoy a great fête was planned, and Richelieu, knowing that the

Princesse de Navarre had been a success and that no other poet was better liked by Madame de Pompadour than Voltaire, ordered another festival play from him. Joyfully he accepted the undertaking, and composed an allegory, *Le Temple de la Gloire,* the curtain rising to disclose Envy in its cave about to attack Trajan, the invincible but mild conqueror, returning from war to the accompaniment of songs of praise. This flattery was in keeping with the taste of the times. Voltaire was given a seat at the King's table for supper; but Louis, though he had spoken a few words to the composer Rameau, said nothing to Voltaire—it seems that this was due not to any dissatisfaction, but to awkwardness and apathy. However, the rumor started that the poet had fallen into disgrace. The story was that the King was sitting with Richelieu in his loge when Voltaire turned to the latter with the question: "Is Trajan satisfied?" He said it so loudly that the King could not help but hear it. The King found this remark impertinent and did not answer.

Voltaire took his position as royal historian seriously and projected a history of the King's last war. To carry out his plan he not only gathered information from the most important French participants in the war, but endeavored also to get the opponents' version. When he learned that the defeated Duke of Cumberland had a secretary by the name of Falkener, he wrote to the latter hoping he might be a relative of his English friend of the same name. It turned out to be his friend himself. Voltaire had proposed to the Marquis d'Argenson, his school comrade and present protector, to undertake a journey to see Falkener when d'Argenson gave him a political commission.

It was a question of writing a protest against the breaking of a treaty by the Dutch. They had pledged themselves at the capitulation of Tournay that the garrison should not bear arms or enter foreign military service for the next eighteen months. Now, nevertheless, the Dutch intended to send troops to Scotland to help the English oppose the Pretender to the throne, Charles-Edward. As England was at war with France, this was not only a violation of the treaty, but it was direct support of the British Empire which could thus release six thousand men for use against France.

Voltaire received the assignment at ten o'clock in the evening. The next morning he sent the Minister the admirable document which bears the title *Représentations aux Etats-Generaux de Hollande,* whose sound logic and polite tone impressed the States-General, who had ignored the remonstrances of the French Ambassador.

A seat in the Academy became vacant, and Voltaire, who had not recovered from his former disappointments, set his friends to work. This time Louis XV, under the influence of Madame de Pompadour and Richelieu, without again retracting his word, expressed himself in favor of Voltaire's election, and it went through so smoothly that not even the Bishop de Mirepoix objected. But at the same time the news that Voltaire had applied for the vacant seat mobilized all those in the French literary world who hated and envied him. One libel after another appeared, and the slanderous ballads, parodies and lampoons of earlier years were reprinted and circulated. Offended by this flood of abuse Voltaire sought satisfaction in Court and brought suits that wasted a great deal of his time but accomplished very little else.

12

Voltaire as a courtier, shows himself at his best when he compares Louis XV with Trajan and succeeds, with Madame's recommendation, in being admitted to the French Academy. It would have been a reflection on the Academy had Voltaire not become a member. Over the entrance to its hall it had to install a bust of Molière with the inscription: "His glory lacked nothing; ours lacked him." It would have made itself a laughingstock had it had to face Molière's bust with another, of Voltaire, bearing the same inscription.

It was hardly seemly for a writer of Voltaire's standing to show himself so ambitious to win membership in an institution which could not increase his prestige appreciably. But he thought less of his prestige than of his safety. The Academy seemed to offer its members an immunity that the free-lance could never enjoy.

In his inaugural speech he deviated so far from the traditional form as not to confine himself to complimentary remarks on Cardinal Richelieu and on his predecessor in the Academy. He developed his ideas about the French language, and dwelt particularly on two points. First he drew attention to the fact that the French, in contrast to other nations, translated poetic works into prose; he was strong in his belief that verse should be translated into verse; second, he drew attention to the euphemistic tendency of French poetry. Vergil in his *Georgica* called all farm implements by their names, and Dante did not hesitate in his *Divine Comedy* to give the correct name to anything; it was not the same in French poetry, where it had become impossible to call things by their everyday names. The theatrical style had eliminated every other; the language of the sophisticated had eliminated the language of the heart and the simple vocabulary of villagers, the names for animals, plants and things. The language, even so, had become predominant in Europe. It was spoken by the King of Prussia and by the Empress of Russia, but it was abstract and thus had become narrow and impoverished.

Voltaire in this address, while discussing France's military advantages, emphasized warmly the merits of Maurice of Saxony and of Marshal Richelieu; he concluded with the obligatory glorification of the King, and apparently he felt no shame in expressing the hope of seeing the statue of the King erected in Paris with the inscription: "To the father of the Fatherland."

Nevertheless he did not attain an unassailable position at Court by this attitude. His verses to Madame de Pompadour, which, though unpublished were widely known, especially the lines ending "Et tous deux gardez vos conquêtes," which pictured the King as having been conquered by the Marquise, had caused ill-feeling in the Queen's circle and in Maria Leszczynska. The time was past when she addressed him as "Mon pauvre Voltaire." The Queen's Court incited the King's daughters against Voltaire. They protested to the King against the boldness and disrespect in a poem which compared his conquest of Flanders with the conquest of his own person.

13

When Voltaire after waiting two years was appointed to fill the vacant position of one of the *gentilhommes ordinaires* of His Majesty (December 22, 1746) and the news reached Poitou, the home of the Arouet family, the haughty and ignorant country gentlemen broke into indignant protest.

We can read a letter on the subject by a country gentleman Ferrand de Méré. It is a most valuable document, for not one sentence in it is written correctly, although it is filled with the conviction of its author's unquestionable superiority. The beginning reads:

> On m'averti, mon respequetable oncle, que le roy, insité en aireurs par des malintenciones, grattifie du titre de gentilhomme de sa charmbre un cuidam nomé Arouet, de Saint-Lou, fils d'une Domar, qui s'est fet connoître du nom de Voltere. Le roy ne fera pas l'affront à la noblesse de dispancé ce cuidam de ses preuve, qui pour ce les procuré se vairat obligé de les cherché dans les parans de sa mère, pars qui l'est de la rautur du cauté paternel (parce qu'il est de la roture de côté); ce qui seroit un dezoneur pour des gentilshommes de nom et d'arme, nobles de pèrenfils de temps immémorable.

As today one has no correct appreciation of the prejudices of the nobility of two hundred years ago, so one does not know how difficult it was to travel. In uncomfortable coaches one rode on impossible roads, with frequent interruptions on the way, when a wheel came off, and stops at inns where the only thought of the hosts was to bleed the traveler of as much money as possible for a poor meal and an uncomfortable bed. Even those who traveled like Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet, not usually stopping at the inns, had to submit to be cheated. A hostess would demand a louis d'or for a cup of bouillon. If a wheel came off and the coach overturned, the farmers who helped to right it had to be grossly overtipped, and even then, if the amount did not suit them and the coach broke down a little further on, neither love nor money would induce them to give assistance.

Another inconvenience was the inopportune time at which one arrived at one's destination. We have seen that Madame de Graffigny arrived in Cirey at two o'clock in the morning. Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet arrived at midnight at the Château Anet to visit the old Duchess of Maine. They came just after supper but with large appetites, and it caused no little trouble to prepare their rooms as late as that. Especially as Madame du Châtelet seemed filled with affectations. First she complained of smoke, then of noise: she needed complete silence in which to do her work.

The couple made up for the trouble they caused by their gift of entertaining. Both could play comedy well, and Madame du Châtelet sang excellently. Among other plays, Voltaire's farce, *Boursouffle,* was performed.

The couple went from Anet to Paris and followed the Royal family to Fontainebleau, where an unpleasant incident and a careless word interrupted the smooth course of Voltaire's life.

Like most of the great ladies of that time, the Marquise had an ardent passion for gambling. In a poem written in her honor, Voltaire indicated this:

> Tout lui plait, tout convient à son vaste génie;
> Les livres, les bijoux, les compas, les pompons,
> Les vers, les diamans, le biribi, l'optique,
> L'algèbre, les soupers, le latin, les joupons,
> L'opéra, les procès, le bal et la physique.

One evening, while gambling in Fontainebleau at the Queen's table, she lost 400 louis d'ors, all the money she had with her and all she had been able to get from her solicitor before she went out. Voltaire gave her what he had on him, 200 louis d'ors—which promptly went the same way. A servant who was sent to the nearest usurer obtained another 200 louis d'ors at exorbitant interest; Madame du Châtelet's former lady-companion scraped up 180 louis d'ors. She could try her luck again. But good luck did not come.

In spite of Voltaire's warnings Emily kept on playing until dawn. She lost 80,000 livres. Voltaire who had been only a spectator could not refrain from telling his friend, but in English, that in her absorption in the game she had overlooked the fact that she was playing with scoundrels. The word was hardly too strong. There are ample proofs that noble gentlemen and ladies of that day were not above appropriating, during the play, gold pieces which were lying around. But to say such a thing aloud at the Queen's table where the highest nobility of both sexes was assembled, and to do so in the naïve belief that none of these gentlemen or ladies would understand the word "scoundrel"—that was a carelessness that could have been committed only by a man of Voltaire's temper.

The only possible escape was immediate flight. Voltaire and the Marquise had the coach made ready the same night and disappeared. In their haste they even forgot to take any money with them. This caused many unpleasantnesses on the way.

In the meantime the Duchess of Maine had taken up her residence in her Château de Scéaux, and Voltaire took refuge there. He was led over a back-stairway to an apartment separated from the rest of the château, and here he spent several months behind closed shutters, without going out or showing himself. Even in the daytime he had to work by artificial light, and in the deepest solitude. At two o'clock at night he was taken to the bedroom of the Princess where a supper was served beside her bed, and where he read the old lady what he had written during the day. This was not little; he turned out a number of excellent works in a form which he had not previously tried, the short philosophic novels *Babouc, Memmon, Scarmentado, Micromégas,* and *Zadig.* The Duchess, famous for her wit, told him many anecdotes which he used in his *Century of Louis XIV*. There were many things that no one was so well qualified to describe as she, who was a grandchild of the great Condé and widow of a son of Louis and Madame de Montespan.

Finally Madame du Châtelet arrived and freed the imprisoned poet. When the anger died down she had secured from everyone a promise that the words that Voltaire had let slip should be forgotten. In this she succeeded the more easily, thanks to her having employed every means to pay her gambling debts. The winner who probably had not an absolutely clear conscience, gladly consented to a reduction for cash.

Now the couple set out for Cirey. The Marquise was fond of traveling at night, so it was nine in the evening when Voltaire and she took their seats in the coach which was loaded to capacity with luggage. The earth was covered with snow and it was bitter cold. The road was uneven, and full of deep holes. Just outside of Nangins the axle broke and the heavy coach turned on its side. Voltaire lay on the bottom, with Madame du Châtelet and her maid on top of him; above them the entire weight of suitcases, trunks and bundles.

As the two postilions and two lackeys could not lift the coach, messengers were sent to the next village. The snow lay deep, but Voltaire and his friend sat on the cushions which they put on the edge of the ditch, and quickly forgot their accident looking at the clear, bright sky, and discussing astronomical questions. All they wanted was a telescope, and they had forgotten all about their situation when the messengers returned with help.

II

LUNEVILLE AND PARIS

1

After the couple had stayed a month in Cirey, spending their time as usual in study and theatricals, they accepted the invitation of King Stanislaw to Luneville, the capital of his dukedom of Lorraine, where he liked to see amusing guests. He gave Voltaire and the Marquise a splendid welcome. At first he was looked down upon by the people of his little domain, who clung to the old Royal family, and who knew that Stanislaw's reign was only a step in preparation for annexation by France. As a matter of fact, the Chancellor Monsieur de la Galaizière was Lorraine's real ruler. The King's activities were limited to providing the country with fine buildings and striving for popularity by public benefactions. The little Court was idyllic and attractive. It was a certain satisfaction to Voltaire, of whom it was said that the Queen's anger had driven him from Versailles, to show the French Court how much he was liked by the Queen's father.

The fact that Stanislaw was a strict churchman had by no means kept him from supporting a pretty mistress, the Marquise de Boufflers. And the fact that the Marquise made him happy did not keep the King from sharing this happiness, like his power, with his Chancellor. This relationship was known to the King. The Marquise was tender, good-hearted, and phlegmatic. She loved pleasure and gladly accepted the nickname of *Dame de Volupté*.

She was amiable, and got along pretty well with her old King; but now and then his gallantries made her lose patience. One day when the King visited her while she was dressing and began to praise the whiteness of her neck, the beauty of her arms, the color of her hair, she interrupted him: "My prince, will you not spare me the smallest compliment: Is that all?"—"No," retorted the King, "it is not all. But my Chancellor will tell you the rest." But he was not the only one who "told the rest." Monsieur de Saint-Lambert did his share.

One evening at the supper table of Louis XV in Choisi the conversation turned to the question as to whether it were possible to love several women at the same time with equal tenderness. The King, holding a glass of Vin d'Aï in his hand said: "Doesn't one have an equal fondness for Burgundy, for Bordeaux and for this wine with the bright color which I now drink to your health, gentlemen?"

The Marquise de Boufflers would not have hesitated to agree with the King.

2

In his benefactions King Stanislaw had the desire to further the arts and sciences. As far as his means permitted he gave small pensions to such men of letters as asked for them; to others he granted his protection, which, in view of his position as the father of the Queen of France, could be very valuable.

3

The royal host gave Voltaire his warm attention. Madame du Châtelet at once became the friend of the Marquise de Boufflers, who left nothing undone to make her stay comfortable. She was soon so happy in Luneville that Voltaire, as he wrote to d'Argental, thought she would never want to leave the place. Emily took part in the dramatics at Luneville, both opera and drama.

We have seen how long it was since she felt fully satisfied in her relations with Voltaire. In temperament they had gradually grown as far apart as they were close together in their intellectual interests.

Now, about ten years after Voltaire's love had changed to friendship, when she met the young and handsome, but vain Saint-Lambert, love flamed up and took full possession of her.

In May, 1748, Emily, forty-one years old, and Saint-Lambert, who was ten years younger, began to meet in secret, to their mutual delight.

Madame du Châtelet felt as if a new epoch in her life had commenced. Her first lines to Saint-Lambert read: "I can feel no remorse for anything, because you love me; but unfortunately, what has happened I owe to myself. Had I not spoken to you at the house of Monsieur de la Galaizière, you would not have loved me. I do not know whether to be content with a love which depended upon such a trifle; I do not know but that I would have done better to have left you to the egoistic pleasure you would find in not loving. But it is for you to decide these questions."

Saint-Lambert seems to have combined with his pride at his conquest a certain fear of the restraint to which such an exacting love would subject him. He saw that his freedom could easily be curtailed. He had planned a journey to Italy, which he had to give up, and a journey to England, of which now nothing could come. From a letter of the Marquise it can be seen that he had spoken to her of his sacrifice of the Italian sun for her sake.

She writes: "This proof of love, this renunciation of a trip to the other side of the Alps, of which you so pointedly remind me—had you not done this for me when I asked you for it, I would not believe that you love me. I attach more importance to this promise than you do; I am very much afraid that even if we say the same things, we do not understand each other. But when I think of the attitude you took toward me in Nancy, and of all you gave up for me, and the love you showed me, then I feel I am unjust to say anything to you except that I love you; this feeling crowds out every other."

One moment Emily asks Saint-Lambert to come to her, the next she hurries to him. Here are two letters which complement each other. The first reads: "The weather is delightful; but I have no enjoyment without you; I am waiting for you to stroll with me and feed my swans with bread. Come to me as soon as you are dressed. You can go riding afterward if you want to." The other reads: "I will hurry to you as soon as I am through supper. Madame de Boufflers then goes to bed. She is delightful and I feel a little guilty because I have not told her. But I adore you and it seems to me that when one loves, one can commit no wrong."

There is nothing unusual in this. A woman of forty years loves in essentially the same way as one of twenty. A highly talented woman loves in the same way as one who is not gifted. A woman who has developed in daily intercourse with Voltaire forgets him in her passion for a new adorer, as completely as if she had crossed his name from her mind. That Saint-Lambert is so much younger is an advantage; that he is so much less attentive is comparatively unimportant. He is the new, the victorious, the only one; to love him is good: to be loved by him would be sweet. That his character is not of granite, that as a writer he is not of a calibre to win immortality, though regrettable, does not weaken the passion. His presumed or obvious faults make no impression. Emily sees them as she once saw Voltaire's weakness for glory and still earlier Richelieu's weakness for women. They are unpleasant facts, but they will have to be endured.

For her as for other women, there is in the garden of Paradise a fruit which is exactly to the taste and when she has found it she will not give it up. Now Saint-Lambert was this fruit.

There is a revealing letter dated: Bar-le-Duc, Thursday morning (May, 1748):

"All my distrust of your character, all the resolutions which I had made were unable to protect me from the love you have aroused in me. I no longer try to resist it; I feel the futility of doing so. The time I spent with you in Nancy has increased it to such a degree that I myself am astonished. But far from reproaching myself, I feel an eternal joy in loving you, and that is the only thing which can ameliorate the pain of your absence. I am fully satisfied with you when we are together, but I am not satisfied with the effect which my departure had upon you. You know well what inclination is but you do not yet know love. I am certain that you will be livelier and brighter today in Luneville than when I was there, and this thought makes me sad. If you can love me only a little; if your heart is unable to give itself unconditionally, to love me immoderately and without calculation, what then will you do with my heart? . . . Doubtless you will write me; but you will make yourself write me. You wish that I would not demand so much of you. I shall get four lines from you; and it will have cost you an effort to write those four lines. . . .

"I expect you in Cirey; do not doubt! If you wish it, you will understand that it can easily be arranged; but you don't wish ardently for anything! Without the proof of love, which you reproach me so sharply for requiring of you, giving up the Italian journey, I would not have believed that you loved me."

4

When Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet met the King of Poland in Commerci, comfortable quarters had been reserved for them. The Marquise had a suite on the ground floor, the windows of which overlooked the court of the castle; Voltaire had a smaller apartment on the second floor with a view over the gardens; both were in the left wing of the castle. The Marquise de Boufflers lived in the same garden in the building in which the baths were located near the *orangerie*. She did the honors of the table at which the guests took their meals. The King never ate supper; he went to bed early.

Monsieur de Saint-Lambert had not been invited on the excursion from Commerci to Luneville; the King did not like his making love to the Marquise de Boufflers. As Saint-Lambert had not been invited, he came incognito and got lodgings in the parsonage which adjoined the *orangerie*. A door led from the parsonage into the vaults so that the priest could walk in the garden as often as he wished.

In the other end of the same vault was a door leading into the bath-house where Madame de Boufflers lived. Through this door the King came every afternoon to play a game of cards with the Marquise, to hear some music, or to smoke his pipe. Then when he retired between nine and ten o'clock Monsieur de Saint-Lambert came in the same way. A lighted window told him when the King was in the house, and when the light was extinguished he knew that the King had retired. He had his own keys and with a dark lantern he found his way to the apartment of the Marquise. Here every evening she gave little suppers to those of her friends who had the secret of Monsieur de Saint-Lambert's presence in Commerci. All the guests were served by her own lackeys, who brought the meals from the King's kitchen.

Monsieur de Saint-Lambert had become somewhat bored with all the precautions he had to observe in order to see Madame de Boufflers, when the arrival of the Marquise du Châtelet turned his interests in another direction. Now he began to spend his evenings with Madame du Châtelet until the moment when he was permitted to appear for supper with the Marquise de Boufflers.

One evening when Voltaire had come down from his rooms before being told that the supper was served in the bath-house, not finding a lackey, he entered Madame du Châtelet's apartment unannounced. Thus he came to the last room, which was only half lit, and there he discovered Emily and Monsieur de Saint-Lambert on the sofa in so intimate an entertainment that they apparently had not thought of the appearance of a third person.

Surprised and angry, Voltaire reproached them most violently. Saint-Lambert answered that he was greatly astonished that anyone dared to call him to account for his behavior, and that whoever did not like it had only to go outside in the front of the castle, He would follow at once, and he would be willing to give any explanation.

In a rage, Voltaire at once left the room and ordered his valet Longchamp, who has left a description of the scene, to secure a post-chaise immediately, to rent or purchase it, as his own had been left in Paris; the carriage was to appear at the front of the castle. He was firmly resolved to leave Commerci that very night. Astonished at the sudden resolution which had not even been hinted at the previous day, and the causes of which Longchamp did not know, he went to Madame du Châtelet to inform her of the order and to ask her for the reason. She answered that Monsieur de Voltaire was seeing ghosts, that he was excited because he had come upon Monsieur de Saint-Lambert in her rooms; he must be stopped before he could take any sensational step. Longchamp must refrain from carrying out the order given him by Monsieur de Voltaire in the excitement of the moment; she would succeed in quieting his master; he must be allowed to calm himself and be detained until the next day.

So Longchamp went to Voltaire at two o'clock in the morning and told him that no conveyance was to be had in Commerci, either to hire or to purchase. The rest of Voltaire's servants were billeted all over the city. Longchamp, only, slept in the little room next to Voltaire's bedroom. Before Voltaire went to bed he gave his valet a purse and ordered him to ride to Nancy at dawn and to bring from there a suitable traveling coach. When Longchamp saw how serious his resolve was, he wished to warn Madame du Châtelet, and found her at her desk. She asked if Voltaire was still so excited; he answered that it looked that way; he had just gone to bed, but would scarcely be able to sleep that night. She sent the servant away, telling him she would go upstairs and speak to Monsieur de Voltaire herself.

Longchamp quietly went back to his room. A few minutes later there came a knock at the door of the apartment. The servant took a light and admitted Madame du Châtelet, then went to announce her to his master. As Voltaire saw that Longchamp was half undressed he could not suppose that he had expected the visit of the Marquise. The servant lighted two candles and retired. But as the wall between his room and that of his master was very thin, he could hear most of the conversation, and what was missing was later supplied by Mademoiselle du Thil, the confidante of the Marquise, who some time before had facilitated Voltaire's approach to the Pope.

As long as Longchamp was in the room Emily spoke English with Voltaire, so the valet understood nothing. But he heard her frequently employ a word of endearment which she often used when she spoke English to Voltaire. Then he heard in French, through the wall:

He: "What? You want me to believe you after what I saw? I have risked my health and my fortune for you, made every sacrifice—and you betray me!"

She: "My love is unchanged, but for a long time you have complained that you are sick, that your strength is leaving you, and that you can no longer make love. I am very sorry for that. Your health is very important to me; there is nobody on earth to whom it is so dear. You for your part have shown the deepest concern over my physical needs; you were even fascinated by them and assisted as long as you physically could. Now that you admit that you cannot do anything for my well-being without the greatest harm to yourself, have you the right to be angry because one of your friends takes your place?"

He: "Oh, you are absolutely right. But since things must be as they are, please see to it that at least they do not appear before my eyes."

When Madame du Châtelet saw that his agitation was quieted she embraced him and withdrew, urging him to go to bed himself.

She had no less trouble in quieting Saint-Lambert, and stopping him from challenging Voltaire because of the vituperation he had hurled in his excitement. She overcame his resistance, however, and even induced him to take the first step to a reconciliation. The next evening Saint-Lambert visited Monsieur de Voltaire on the pretext of wishing to inquire about his health. Modestly Saint-Lambert approached him and asked him to excuse the heated words of the previous day. Voltaire pressed both hands of the young man and said: "My child, I have forgotten the words and I alone was wrong. You are at the fortunate age at which one can love and be loved. Make use of the short moments! A sick, old man like myself is no longer fit for love's amusements."

The next evening all three sat as usual at the supper table of the Marquise de Boufflers. Voltaire remained the staunchest and most devoted friend of Emily until her death; and until his own death he remained on friendly terms with Saint-Lambert. How sincere the reconciliation was, is shown by the following poem of these days on their respective positions in regard to Emily:

Et nous assemblons pour lui plaire,
Dans ces vallons et dans ces bois,
Les fleurs dont Horace autrefois
Faisait des bouquets pour Glycère,
Saint-Lambert, ce n'est que pour toi:
Que ces belles fleurs sont écloses;
C'est ta main qui cueille les roses,
Et les épines sont pour moi.

Twenty years later, in his 112th Epistle, Voltaire thanks Saint-Lambert with the heartiest words for *Les Saisons*, the work so over-estimated in its own day, on which the poet had worked so long and which had entirely satisfied Emily.

5

For a long time Monsieur du Châtelet had been manœuvring for a desirable post at the Court of Lorraine. He thought he was entitled to it, and his wife was resolved that he should get it, as a thing which was due the family. The position was that of a general, which, Lorraine being what it was, could naturally be only a sinecure. King Stanislaw would gladly have given it to the Marquis had not another man applied for it, who was an excellent soldier and the King's closest personal friend, whereas Monsieur du Châtelet bored him a little.

"Monsieur de Berchini," as Monsieur du Châtelet calls the competitor, was the Hungarian Count de

Bercsény, whose father had once led the Hungarian troops against Leopold's invading army. The Count himself had won such distinction as a cavalry general, that the bravery of his hussars became proverbial and he was later appointed Marshal of France. Small wonder that King Stanislaw wished to give this man the proof of esteem for which he asked. But Madame du Châtelet could not understand the King's hesitation. She writes to Saint-Lambert:

"If Monsieur de Berchini gets the command, it will be impossible for Monsieur du Châtelet and myself ever again to set foot in Lorraine. As long as he holds it, no position of honor, no favor, can overcome our disgust at seeing a Hungarian, and moreover a younger man than Monsieur du Châtelet, commanding in his place; and nothing will ever reconcile us to it. But my friendship for Monsieur de Voltaire would make this thought unbearable to me; judge for yourself what impression the matter must have made upon me, when I remind myself that I could have spent my life with you in Luneville and we could have jointly undertaken journeys to Cirey!"

The good-natured King, who on one hand did not wish to refuse his Hungarian friend, on the other would not offend the house du Châtelet, settled the matter by appointing the Marquis his *Grand maréchal des logis,* while he attached Count de Bercsény to himself as *Grand écuyer de Lorraine.*

The most striking part about this letter of Madame du Châtelet is that she is willing to sacrifice her hopes of living with her lover to offended ambition, while at the same time it nearly kills her to realize, as she does, that Saint-Lambert is pursuing his own ambitious plans without any consideration of the possibility, which means so much to her, of their seeing one another again. One may, for instance, compare passages like the following, dated from Trianon, April, 1749: "What right have you to be cross because I have my summer dresses sent here? . . . You who are not even certain whether you may not soon be leaving Lorraine forever? You, who would be in garrison in Flanders now, had not the Prince of Beauveau refused you! . . . You want to be free to separate from me forever, as soon as you see an advantage in doing so. But you grumble at me for staying a fortnight longer when my health or my business demands it!" And she continues bitterly, referring to his efforts to get command of a regiment of grenadiers in order to be able to go into active French service, without regard for the fact that this would prevent her from meeting him often at the Court of Lorraine.

6

In June, 1748, Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet were in Paris. The rehearsals of *Semiramis* drew Voltaire there. In a letter to d'Argental he says that the actors had not rehearsed even *Mérope* with so much enthusiasm: "They got me to a point where I cried. They made its horror so fascinatingly real that even I had to shudder."

That the first performance was not an entire success was due to the circumstance that the spectators filled so much space on the stage. This spoiled the illusion at the grave of Nimus, where the ghost was to appear, but where the space was entirely taken up. The tragic mood was rudely broken by an outburst of laughter, when the guard called to the spectators who obstructed the way: "Room for the ghost, gentlemen!"

At first Crébillon and Voltaire had been friendly colleagues. With courtesy Voltaire even called himself the "apprentice" of Crébillon. But now in Paris and at the theater, Voltaire learned that among his haters it had become a habit to declare the old, nearly forgotten poet a far better writer of tragedy than Voltaire. Added to that, Madame de Pompadour had begun to take an interest in the old man. She planned to have his *Catiline* performed, and was trying to show her grateful memory of the coaching he had given her in the art of declamation when she was a half-grown girl.

Voltaire's dislike of Crébillon was due to the latter's having kept *Mahomet* off the stage; as a poet he could not esteem him; he found him rough, fragmentary, eccentric, without taste. So as Racine had competed with Corneille over the theme of *Titus and Berenice,* and Pradon with Racine over *Iphigenie,* Voltaire now resolved to rewrite Crébillon's best-known plays *Catiline* and *Electra,* and to surpass him. He did so, with *Rome sauvée* and *Oreste.*

This quarrel was not worthy of Voltaire. But he felt called upon to show the French Court that he was superior to the one who was preferred to him. His position in the theater disturbed him deeply. The actors, feeling that his favor at Court was on the wane, no longer showed him their former devotion; they were getting stubborn and sometimes arrogant. Those who were not satisfied with their rôles no longer even said good morning to him. La Noue, who in Lille had been so enthusiastic about *Mahomet,* told everybody that *Semiramis* was a bad play. One day Voltaire, wishing to learn what the public really thought of the play, borrowed some old clothes from Abbé de Villevieille, put big spectacles on his nose, donned an immense, unpowdered wig that swallowed up his slim face, and topped the wig with a huge triangular hat. In this attire he sat one evening at a corner table in the café Procope with a newspaper propped in front of him, and waited until the performance was over and the spectators came flooding in. They came, and he heard his poor play torn to pieces.

He had become so sensitive that, learning of the intention of the Italian theater to perform a travesty of his *Semiramis,* he wrote to the Queen asking her, in return for his devotion of many years, to have the parody forbidden. The Queen answered that this was a matter that was none of her business. It cannot be said that he had made himself particularly deserving of her favor. Madame de Pompadour was good-natured enough to have the performance of the parody forbidden in Fontainebleau. Naturally, however, it was played in Paris, where every sensational play was travestied.

On his way back from Paris to Lorraine, Voltaire fell so ill in Chalons that for several days his life seemed to be endangered. The emotional strain had exhausted his vitality.

7

Madame du Châtelet required no more than a stay of three or four days in Cirey to prepare for a new journey. She and Voltaire both wanted to go to Paris for the winter. But various symptoms revealed to her that she, whose last child was now seventeen, was again about to become a mother.

Could this condition and its consequences be hidden? Could it be kept from Monsieur du Châtelet? Impossible. When Voltaire noticed how uneasy and troubled she was he asked her sympathetically for the reason. She informed him. He concealed from her the shock the news gave him, and tried to quiet her to prevent her becoming ill. He took the matter in his own hands and to begin with wrote to Monsieur de Saint-Lambert to invite him to Cirey. The next day he arrived.

It would be a mistake, if not an impossibility, to hide Madame du Châtelet's pregnancy from the neighborhood. An unforeseen accident might reveal everything. The first question was to decide upon the paternity. Voltaire said: "Don't let that trouble you! We will give the child a place among Madame du Châtelet's miscellaneous works."

Monsieur du Châtelet, who was in Dijon, was asked to come at once to Cirey to adjust a family matter and prevent a law-suit.

He soon arrived and was greeted by his wife with friendly caresses. Madame du Châtelet invited to the château several country gentlemen to make his stay pleasant. Little fêtes were given, and theatrical performances. In the forenoons the Marquise discussed domestic matters with her husband; he visited his tenants, his forests, his iron-foundries, went hunting with his guests, and after acquiring an appetite, they ate and drank well. The Marquis told of the war in Flanders; all listened with interest. Voltaire was full of the drollest ideas, so that one never stopped laughing.

Madame du Châtelet presided at the table in the most becoming attire and, seated next to her husband, artlessly told him delightful things which he had not heard since they were first married many years ago. He was astonished to notice that his wife seemed to him fifteen years younger; he fell in love again. Ridiculous as it seemed at that time for a husband to court his own wife, he again became gallant. Madame du Châtelet seemed astonished and became reserved. The resistance he felt he had to overcome increased his desire, and his wooing became so ardent that the resistance gave way.

For the first time in fifteen years, the Marquis du Châtelet occupied the same room as the Marquise and thus for the whole month he stayed at Cirey. When time was up and he had to return to garrison, he heard with great joy a confession his wife made to him; although she was not sure, she thought, etc. With masculine pride he at once told the guests at the château of the happy impending event.

The famous couple again journeyed to Paris where Emily was occupied with the introduction to her translation of Newton, at which she was working feverishly before she had to stop mathematics and astronomy to carry out her problems as a woman.

The correspondence between Voltaire and Frederick was so confidential that not even Madame du Châtelet's pregnancy remained unmentioned in it. Frederick, who was then anxious for companionship with Voltaire, insisted that Voltaire had promised to spend two months in his company and seized on this news like a falcon on its prey: if Emily has to go into childbed she really does not need Voltaire for that. Frederick writes (June 10, 1749):

"I want to study with you. This year I have some spare time. Who knows whether I shall have any during any other year."

He rejects Voltaire's constant excuses of undermined health.

"One influences his body to do what he wishes. The soul cries, 'March!' And the body does it. This is one of your own mottoes, of which I wish to remind you.

"So Madame du Châtelet is going to be confined in the month of September; you are no midwife; she can do very well without you in childbed. . . . By the way, remember that the pleasure one gives people without being importuned is enjoyed far more than the pleasure for which one has been begged.

"I scold you because the gouty always have to scold. You, of course, can do as you please, but you cannot deceive me, and now I shall learn whether you really care for me or whether all you told me was only empty words."

How strong Voltaire's attachment was to Emily, in spite of everything, is shown by his refusal (Cirey, June 29, 1749):

"Neither Monsieur Bartenstein nor Monsieur Bestucheff, mighty as they are, nor Frederick the Great, before whom the two tremble, can prevent me from keeping an obligation which I regard as absolutely binding. I am no father, no physician, no midwife; but I am a friend, and not even for the sake of Your Majesty am I willing to leave a woman who will perhaps die in September. It seems as if her lying-in may develop seriously. But I promise You, Sire, if she gets over it I will pay you my respects in October."

In the meantime the poor Marquise gave very little thought to her unselfish friend. Her distrustful attitude toward Saint-Lambert had changed, her outbursts and accusations had yielded to a great, indescribable tenderness, that of one who quietly bids farewell to life. The last letter she wrote to him, the last she wrote at all, begins: "You know me very little; you do my heart injustice, if you think that I could exist for two days without a letter from you, if it were possible to get one. You do not feel it a misfortune to do your sick-watch the first thing upon your arrival, but that does not help the impatience with which I bear your absence. When you are with me I can easily reconcile myself to my condition, I even forget about it; but when you are gone, everything seems black."

Madame du Châtelet had written to her friend, Mademoiselle du Thil, in Paris. She came and stayed with her during the last part of her pregnancy and during the birth. With her cool-headedness and because of her dark forebodings the Marquise had put all her letters and papers in order, with everything in separate envelopes on which she wrote the addresses, and gave the whole packet to Longchamp with instructions to take good care of it.

Finally the much-feared hour came, and Madame du Châtelet gave birth, during the night of September 3, 1749, to a little girl, without difficulties or complications. The child lived but a few weeks, however.

During the first few days after the birth, the Marquise felt somewhat weak, but otherwise very well. On September 10, her condition became very serious. She suffered a choking fit. Those present ascribed this to the fact that, because of the intense heat, she had drunk a glass of ice-cooled almond milk. When the choking-fit ceased it seemed as though the patient would fall asleep. The guests at the château wished to take their supper while she was sleeping, and went to Madame de Boufflers. At the bedside remained only Monsieur de Saint-Lambert, Mademoiselle du Thil, a chambermaid, and Voltaire's valet Longchamp. The patient exchanged several words with Saint-Lambert and fell asleep. Ten minutes later those present heard a rattling sound. She had become unconscious; and a few moments later she was dead.

Monsieur du Châtelet, Voltaire and the other guests hurried back from supper, but when they reached her room they found only the body. Voltaire and Saint-Lambert were the last to leave the bedside. Then Voltaire went down the steps which led to the park. At the foot of the outer stairway he fell, hitting his head on the stone pavement, and stayed there motionless. His lackey and Saint-Lambert, who happened to pass, tried to bring him to and helped him up. He was scarcely on his feet when, with tears in his eyes, he cried to Saint-Lambert: "You have killed her!"

After a few days when he was calmer, Voltaire remembered that a carnelian ring set with brilliants had been removed from the hand of the deceased. He asked Longchamp to open the back of it without being seen and remove his portrait, which was there. This miniature must not be seen by Monsieur du Châtelet, in case the ring were to be opened. He learned to his astonishment that Madame de Boufflers, at the instigation of Monsieur de Saint-Lambert, had taken the ring and removed the portrait; however, it was not Voltaire's likeness, but that of his young rival. "Heavens!" he said, "that's the way women are. Because of me Richelieu's picture was removed; Saint-Lambert, in turn, has driven me out."

King Stanislaw paid Madame du Châtelet every honor in his power. He ordered all the high officials of his Court to attend the funeral. He showed his friendship to Voltaire by visiting him several times daily and sharing his grief.

Voltaire had become accustomed to think he would spend the rest of his days with Madame du Châtelet. Now he felt lost; he thought of retiring in solitude to a clerical friend of the Châtelet family, Dom Calmet at Senones Abbey; then he thought of going to England and accepting Bolingbroke's hospitality. He gave up both ideas.

At first he accompanied Monsieur du Châtelet to Cirey where many things had to be settled and much had to be packed for the departure. He was not afraid to see Cirey again where he had spent such peaceful years. "I love Cirey," he wrote to d'Argental. "I cannot bear any longer to see Luneville where I lost her in the saddest way. But I like to see the place which she made beautiful. I have not suffered merely the loss of a loved one. I have lost half of myself, a spirit for which mine was made, a friend for twenty years. The most adoring father loves his daughter no differently."

Voltaire had to spend several weeks in Cirey, packing books, furniture and valuables of various kinds, that had collected in his apartment. The statues and busts, which might be damaged in transportation, were packed into empty barrels, and all of this was addressed to Paris.

Some time before, Voltaire had loaned Monsieur du Châtelet forty thousand francs for the restoration and beautifying of Cirey. As the Marquis was not in a position to make such a large payment, Voltaire accepted ten thousand francs, gave a receipt for the rest, and the two men separated in the most friendly way. Neither laid eyes on the other again.

Emily du Châtelet, one of whose virtues it was never to say a mean thing, never to listen to or to indulge in gossip, to whom every sort of slander was unknown, was after her sudden death a prey to the tongue of society. That she had come to childbed at forty-one was, to contemporary opinion, indecent, even ridiculous. Nobody spoke of the moral side of the matter, but there was scandal over the question of age. Women at that time matured much earlier and aged much more quickly than now.

In Paris an epigram was in circulation, which was ascribed to Madame du Deffand—unjustly, because it can be found in the works of Frederick the Great. In it he gives vent to his anger at the woman who was to blame for his having had so long to do without Voltaire. The verses are witty and malicious, but unworthy.

Ci-gît qui perdit la vie
Dans le double accouchement
D'un traité de philosophie
Et d'un malheureux enfant.
On ne sait précisément,
Lequel des deux l'a ravie.
Sur ce funeste événement
Quelle opinion doit-on suivre?
Saint-Lambert s'en prend au livre,
Voltaire dit que c'est l'enfant.

8

Voltaire moved into the Paris house where he had resided with Madame du Châtelet. Monsieur du Châtelet sold him his share in it. The only people Voltaire would allow near him were his notary, his nephew, Abbé Mignot, and the two friends of his youth, Richelieu and d'Argental. They came in turns to give him their sympathy.

But he could not brood over his sorrow. He was kept busy with his work for the theater, his *Catiline* and *Oreste,* written to outdo Crébillon.

Le Kain says in his *Note sur Monsieur de Voltaire:* "For thirty years Paris had not seen such an organized attempt to howl down a play as at the premiere of *Oreste*. It was hissed from five to eight o'clock. Finally, however, the audience prevailed over Crébillon's cat-callers, and expressed their admiration. Enthusiastically Voltaire leaned half-way out of his loge and called wildly: 'Applaud, applaud! brave Athenians! It is like Sophocles!' "

The relative success of the production was followed by a flood of libelous scribblings.

These vulgarities had at least one good effect upon the sensitive poet, in that they kept him from brooding constantly over his bereavement. It was out of the question for him to remain alone: he must have somebody to run his household. At Christmas, 1749, his eldest niece came, the stout Madame Denis, who was devoted to him, otherwise as ordinary as Madame du Châtelet had been extraordinary. She looked after his house to the time of his death.

9

We have seen that Frederick had no scruples about what means he used to have Voltaire come to him. He had letters from Voltaire put into the hands of influential persons in France, about whom something outrageous was said in the letters. It is amusing to see how Voltaire tried to guess the identity of the "dishonest postmaster" who was opening his letters and revealing their contents. Only years later did he find out the truth.

Frederick wanted to have Voltaire near him. Now, after the death of the person who had kept him away, Voltaire still remained in France. Voltaire heard the rumor that Frederick was thinking of making Fréron his literary correspondent in Paris. He did everything to prevent this, and wrote his royal friend a letter which contains these lines:

"I am informed that a certain Fréron has been proposed to Your Majesty. Permit me to inform you that for this position of literary correspondent you need a man who possesses the confidence of the public. Fréron has no such standing. His reputation is tarnished and he is generally despised, etc."

Scarcely had Frederick used this trick when he invented another. Hoping Voltaire would fly into a rage and would see the necessity of going to Berlin to defend his standing, the King addressed four incredible stanzas to the minor poet D'Arnaud Baculard, the gist of which was: France's Apollo is nearing his decline. He is setting, you are rising. His sunset heralds your more gorgeous dawn.

It is scarcely possible that Frederick meant one word of this. But every line was a slap at Voltaire, calculated to sting him into action and to drive him from the Seine to the Spree.

There was scarcely anything more responsible for Voltaire's resolve to leave France.

With half-diplomatic, half-joking canniness Voltaire asked Frederick to send him his traveling expenses, as he would have to make a loan in Berlin. He got the answer he had hoped. But to his request for a sum which would enable him to take along Madame Denis, the King, who did not care for the society of women, gave a cool refusal, as he had when Voltaire had wished to take with him Madame du Châtelet.

So it is not astonishing that Madame Denis did her best to dissuade her uncle from making the journey. She disliked and distrusted Frederick. She was conceited about her position as housekeeper to a famous man and did not wish to see herself robbed of it. She said that Berlin was the sort of capital that Paris was at the time of Hugh Capet. Informed of her remarks, the King exclaimed: "What? Why should I bring misfortune upon a man whom I love, who for me sacrifices his country and everything that is dearest to him!"

Frederick wrote a letter to Louis asking for his gentleman-in-waiting. As we know the King did not like Voltaire, the Queen liked him still less; even the favor of the royal mistress had diminished somewhat after his tactless familiarity. As the King, not merely without reluctance but as though France were being honored, had permitted Maupertuis to accept the presidency of the Academy in Berlin founded by Leibnitz, Voltaire assumed that he would take Frederick's latest request as reflecting honor upon France. But Maupertuis had been popular at Court and among his colleagues—whereas Voltaire was deeply hated. The same writers who several months ago had used their best efforts to injure him, now called him a deserter.

Voltaire's petition for permission to depart was answered telling him that he was free to attach himself to the King of Prussia, but that he could not retain the title of Historian to the King of France. He could, however, retain the title of *gentilhomme ordinaire de Sa Majesté,* as well as his pension of two thousand francs.

Among those who expressed joy in welcoming Voltaire to Berlin was Maupertuis, who felt sure that he would become "the pride of the King" and "the glory of all feasts." Buffon, however, writes in a letter to the Abbé le Blanc: "Maupertuis informs me that Voltaire is going to stay in Prussia, and says that he is a great acquisition for a King who has so much talent and such good taste. I believe that Voltaire's presence will be less pleasing to Maupertuis than to anyone else; the two men are not made to be together in one room."

III

PRUSSIA

1

Several years previously Frederick the Great had written to Voltaire: "I doubt if any such person as Voltaire exists, and I have a reason for doubt. It is impossible that one man could do all the tasks that are credited to Monsieur de Voltaire. Apparently there is in Cirey an academy, composed of the elite of the world, philosophers who translate Newton, epic poets, Corneilles, Catulluses, and Thucydideses, and all their works are published under the name of Voltaire, just as one credits the commander-in-chief with the deeds of his army."

In July, 1750, Voltaire arrived in Potsdam and was received like a demigod.

The King was not the only one who enthused over him. Every day a cover was set for him at the Dowager Queen's table and also at that of the young Queen Frederick who, deserted, lived in Schönhausen outside of Berlin. Frederick's brothers, the Princes of Prussia, appeared in Voltaire's plays. He went over their rôles with them affably and unsubmissively arousing their animation as he knew how to arouse it in all.

Because his health was delicate and his digestion weak, he preferred to omit Frederick's luncheons: "There are too many generals and princes," he used to say. But at the King's evening parties he was indispensable. These were exceptionally gay and entertaining.

The society consisted of enlightened spirits, mostly from France but also from other countries, whom Frederick had gathered around him. The conversation was in French.

There was that charming adventurer, the Marquis of Argens, attractive and learned, whom the King, as was his unfortunate habit, now humiliated, now honored.

There was La Mettrie, the famous cynic and physician, whose researches in natural history were far ahead of his time, a keen scientific man whose abilities not even Voltaire could appreciate. Voltaire was disgusted with La Mettrie's atheism, for which Frederick, though a deist himself, did not reproach him. He had been expelled from Holland and France, and was homeless until Frederick gave him shelter.

There was the brave soldier Chasot who had proved his heroism in many battles. He had been with Frederick since 1742; but he had grown tired of Potsdam and returned soon afterward to Paris, on the pretext of ill-health, since the King never liked to have anyone leave him.

There was the gentle Venetian, Count Algarotti, mathematician and Newtonian, who had visited Madame du Châtelet at Cirey. To him Voltaire addressed the humorous Epistle 75, when the King of Saxony had conferred on Algarotti the title of *Conseiller de guerre.*

Brillant et sage Algarotti
A qui le ciel a départi
L'art d'aimer, d'écrire et de plaire,
Et que pour comble de bienfaits
Un des meilleurs rois de la terre
A fait son conseiller de guerre
Dès qu'il a voulu vivre en paix.

Also among Frederick's guests was the exiled Scotchman George Keith, who was usually called "My Lord Maréchal" because the Scotch title of Marshal was hereditary in his family. When Frederick ascended the throne Keith was sent to France as his ambassador extraordinary. Keith not only remained faithful to Frederick until his death but stayed near him. When he was younger he had lived with a little Turkish girl who had been captured at the taking of Oksakoff; at the age of eighty he stated that Père Sanchez' treatise *De matrimonio* had aroused in him the desire to get married, but then he was all his life a witty, good and honest man.

There also was the once intimate friend of Voltaire and Emily, Moreau de Maupertuis, mathematician, physicist and astronomer, one of the first to defend Newton's doctrine of differential and integral calculus and to side with him against Descartes. He was, as we saw, made president of the Berlin Academy; but in spite of the friendship with which Voltaire and Emily du Châtelet had treated him in Sans-Souci, it was not possible for him to see in Voltaire anything but an unpleasant rival. With Algarotti, Clairaut and several others he had undertaken the scientific expedition into Lapland. By measuring the degrees Maupertuis had established the correctness of Newton's doctrine of the flatness of the earth at its poles. In Torneá he let two sisters make love to him, and he eloped with them to Paris; vainly their father brought suit against him. He had had the rather innocent vanity to have a portrait painted of himself in his sleigh, with fur coat and cap.

Voltaire wrote under this portrait the flattering lines:

> Ce globe, mal connu, qu'il a su mesurer,
> Devient un monument, où sa gloire se fonde,
> Son sort est de fixer la fortune du monde,
> De lui plaire, et de l'éclairer.

At first Voltaire's relations with all the guests of the King were excellent; with the King himself they were delightful. In a letter to d'Argental, from Charlottenburg, August 20, 1750, Voltaire writes: "Frederick the Great resembles Marcus Aurelius in every particular, with the single exception that the Roman Emperor wrote no verses, while Frederick is an excellent poet." He has, the letter states, an even richer imagination than Voltaire himself, though of course less technique. The King therefore asks him to correct verses for him and far from resenting his corrections (as the tyrant Dionysius had done with Philoxenes) he thanks him a thousand times for doing so. The King's prose fully equals his verses; it is admirable.

His only fault is that he writes too fast. He was never told this by his courtiers; he learns it from Voltaire. It is not enough to say that the King is a great man: "He is the best man in the world or I am the most ignorant." Philosophy has perfected his character; he has perfected his nature in the same way that he is now perfecting his works.

The conversations at the King's table were, as a rule, brilliant. There were only bright people at the table and all were tuned to one key.

Frederick knew how by contradictions to provoke them to give their best. The themes were morals, philosophy, history, religion. These were skeptics and cynics talking, and their emancipation was absolute. There were orgies of mockery at dogmas and prejudices; the most wanton jokes about the Bible and the Apocalypse, about the Church and its servants; and the strangest jests about well-known contemporaries, monarchs, courtiers and writers.

Not much wine was consumed, but they became intoxicated on humorous and daring ideas. The meals lasted so long into the night that the servants acquired swollen legs from standing so long.

At these feasts of wit Voltaire was the one who shone most vividly.

Nevertheless there were causes for ill-feeling between him and the King.

Voltaire had made Frederick choose between him and Fréron, after he had in his usual violent way described Fréron as a pariah. Frederick gave in; but he was not used to giving in.

Voltaire asked Frederick to defray his traveling expenses and his request had been granted; besides he had been given generous promises of future reward. Frederick, who was economical out of bitter necessity, economical to the point of avarice, felt the burden of the expense although because of his promise he could only be angry at the free hospitality which Voltaire exercised in his residence. In his teasing way he allowed Voltaire insufficient illumination and insufficient rations of sugar and coffee. Voltaire complained about this in vain.

2

This amounted to nothing. But five months after his arrival, Voltaire's good relations with the King were undermined. The cause was this:

The Elector of Saxony had issued paper money, so-called tax certificates, which had dropped to half their face value. After Frederick's victory over Saxony it was provided in the treaty of peace that every Prussian possessing such certificates should be allowed to redeem them at their full value. This gave rise to speculation. Prussians bought certificates cheap in Holland and were paid their face value. In 1748 the scandal had become so widespread that Frederick, after Saxony had appealed for help, prohibited the certificates entirely in Prussia.

We have seen what a strange mixture of the grand seigneur and the business man Voltaire embodied. He gave the actors, as a rule, even if he was dissatisfied with them, the entire receipts from his plays. The profits from his books he gave various people regardless of the fact that the publishers enriched themselves at his expense.

As he counted on neither the theater nor literature as a source of income, he set to work to make his fortune partly through deals on the grain market and partly by financial speculation for which he was given opportunity by his connections. He was ardent in his condemnation of John Law, and sometimes even of the Pâris brothers who were his own bankers, and about whom he wrote the following Latin verse:

Et Paris et frates et qui rapuere sub illis

But he was keen at taking advantage of every opportunity that came his way; occasionally he even loaned his friends money at high interest; he bought and sold estates. Sometimes he seemed despicably avaricious and showed an astonishing tendency to quarrel, as in a law-suit (in 1761) against President de Brosses over a few cords of wood—a suit in which he was very much in the wrong.

Shortly after his arrival at Berlin he got in touch with two Jewish business men, Abraham Hirschel and son. In September he loaned the father 4,430 thalers, for which the latter gave him a promissory note; he communicated with the son who had a jeweller's shop in November, 1750, and borrowed a number of diamonds which he wore in the rôle of Cicero at the performance of *Rome sauvée.* On one of these occasions Hirschel probably drew Voltaire's attention to the fact that one could do good business and make money by buying and selling Saxon tax certificates.

One cannot assume that Hirschel left Voltaire in any uncertainty about the edict of May 8, 1748, which strictly prohibited such business. But Voltaire came from a country in which protection by one of high rank, not to mention a reigning monarch, would have exempted him from the law; so he probably had not the faintest doubt that a special favorite of the King would be regarded in Prussia as an exception, to whom the law did not apply, and that his financial business would be excused should it not remain entirely secret. He did not yet know anything about Prussian discipline.

He ordered the younger Hirschel in November, 1750, to go to Dresden and purchase 40,000 francs worth of certificates. The King learned of this and it is not astonishing that he was incensed. As soon as Voltaire heard of the King's indignation he knew what a folly he had committed, and not content with giving an immediate counter-order and protesting his own promissory note, he denied having given any order to purchase tax certificates and tried to put an entirely different interpretation on the episode. He said he had asked Hirschel to purchase jewels and furs for him. As if Voltaire had been a jeweller, and as if one would buy furs in Dresden!

A disgusting lawsuit ensued, in which Voltaire fought for no pecuniary gain, but for his honor and his position at the Prussian Court. He did so by resorting to any means, including misrepresentation that was nothing short of perjury; whereas the Jew turned out to be truthful when it was not necessary to lie, lying when he thought a lie would succeed, and enjoyed being in a position to compromise a famous personage.

The degrading thing about it for Frederick the Great, regardless of how the suit resulted, was that a royal Prussian chamberlain with the Order of Merit and an annual income of 20,000 francs, was engaged in a lawsuit with a notorious Jewish agent over a forbidden business transaction. It was a blow to his pride that this man whom he had regarded not only as a genius but as a friend, now a guest at his palace, engaged with the rabble in the pursuit of illegal gain.

The sad thing to us is that, taught by the war that French society had waged against thinkers, Voltaire had come to regard the lie as a justifiable stratagem and was thus persuaded to jeopardize the noblest and finest things in his life, everything he had worked for and won in twenty years, because of a miserable quarrel over a sum of money which he did not even need.

But the matter is more tragic. This wretched lawsuit was the source not only of Frederick's sudden contempt for Voltaire's character, the weakness of which he interpreted quite wrongly as avarice, instead of choleric quarrelsomeness, but also of the German contempt for Voltaire through a century and a half.

Nobody thought of making allowance for him because of the barbarous conditions for which the whole French nation was responsible, which made falsehood the only, and often forlorn, chance to secure oneself against prison or exile.

Frederick had ordered Voltaire not to show his face in the royal presence as long as the lawsuit was going on. Hirschel was fined ten thalers for trying to repudiate his signature and was ordered to return the promissory note. Voltaire had to return the written agreement to Hirschel, or swear that none had ever existed, and had to accept certain jewels mentioned in the contract as payment for a debt of three thousand thalers.

On the same day Voltaire wrote a jubilant letter to the King, telling him that he had won the lawsuit. It was not much of a victory; it consisted mainly in getting back his promissory note of 40,000 francs. He won no moral victory. But he wrote assuring the King of his innocence and devotion.

Frederick answered from Potsdam:

"If you wish to come here, you are free to do so. I would prefer not to hear anything any more about any lawsuit here, not even yours. As you won it, I congratulate you, and I am glad that it is over. I hope that you will have no more lawsuits—either with the Old or with the New Testament. Such dealings leave scars behind, and all the talents of the greatest French wit cannot hide the stains that such a course of action would in time bring upon your name and reputation."

3

The daily companionship of Frederick and Voltaire was resumed, even if with restraint for the first few days. Frederick now began to distinguish between Voltaire's genius and his character, which he esteemed very little.

On the whole, Voltaire was very popular at Court, and life there became apparently the same as before.

But one day La Mettrie told him something that depressed him. To a remark how greatly Voltaire was to be envied for the favor bestowed upon him, Frederick had answered: "Bah, one sucks the orange and throws away the peel!" Voltaire begged La Mettrie to tell him that he had made this up to tease him. But La Mettrie assured him that those were Frederick's exact words.

Some time later Maupertuis went to Frederick and told him that one day General Manheim had gone to Voltaire to ask him to correct his *Reminiscences of Russia;* and while they were together the poet was brought some of the King's verses for correction. Voltaire was reported to have said to Manheim: "Dear friend! Better come back some other time! Here the King sends me his dirty linen to wash. The next time I'll wash yours."

Voltaire denied positively having made any such remark: but it is just like him, and at any rate Frederick believed it and was deeply offended.

Nevertheless, everything continued in its usual course. In 1752, however, a scientific quarrel started between Maupertuis and Voltaire's old friend König, the eminent mathematician of Amsterdam. Maupertuis believed that he had made an important discovery concerning the law of motion when he evolved the principle of least resistance. König, who was indebted to Maupertuis for his appointment as a member of the Academy in Berlin, was not in accord with him on the question of the fundamental laws of motion, and did not wish to publish a criticism, knowing the irritability of the President. Recklessly Maupertuis himself invited him to do so.

König's essay stated that apparently Leibnitz had an idea similar to that of Maupertuis, which was doubtless correct, and in support of his contention he cited a letter from Leibnitz to Professor Hermann. König must be suspected of a desire to tease. We saw how he once behaved in this same way toward Madame du Châtelet and how Maupertuis took part against her.

So apparently it amused him to play a trick on Maupertuis.

Offended, the latter stated that no such letter of Leibnitz ever existed, and when he had made sure of what he suspected, that König did not possess the original of the letter, he induced the Academy of Berlin to declare König's action a deliberate misstatement. König answered with an *Appeal to the Public.* But before the publication of this pamphlet there appeared another, *Reply to an Academician in Berlin,* in which there were many accusations against Maupertuis, including tyranny and ugly behavior toward a quiet scholar whose entire guilt lay in a scientific disagreement with him. There was not one sneering or unnecessary word in it.

Only a master of style could have written thus. There was only one man in Europe who wrote that way. That Voltaire should become involved in this quarrel, that he should attack a man who, like himself, was a daily guest at the King's table, shows an astonishing lack of tact and judgment. And this was only a year and a half after the King had given him to understand that he wanted peace in his house and that he disapproved of Voltaire's contentiousness.

Frederick was excited. His father's blood boiled in his veins. Some one had dared to ridicule the President of his Academy! It was tantamount to ridiculing his Academy, and that was the same as ridiculing himself! He resolved to answer, anonymously, the anonymous Voltaire. Certainly the phrase "dirty linen" was behind it.

The King's answer, *Letter from an Academician in Berlin to an Academician in Paris,* is not worthy of Frederick. It does nothing but laud Maupertuis, of whom it says in stilted style: "The cities quarrel which is his birthplace."—Maupertuis compared with Homer!

The attack upon the President is assigned to the basest motive, jealousy. It had gone so far that Frederick not only wrote against Voltaire but used the words: ignorance, lying, infamy, defamation, shamefulness, etc. The language was French, the coarseness German.

They met as before at meals, talked as if nothing had happened, but how they had to restrain themselves!

When the first edition of Frederick's pamphlet came out the German critics did not know who the author was, and they treated him as if he understood nothing about the real point of controversy. But the second edition appeared with the Prussian eagle and the crown and sceptre on the cover, and all doubt was dispelled.

Had Voltaire understood how impossible the situation was, had he cared, above everything else, to preserve his good standing with the King, there would have been nothing for him to do but drop the matter.

But alas! With all his flexibility he was no courtier but a restless, unrestrained poet, and in spite of his Court manner, the most ungovernable person. Not for nothing was he the wittiest man since the time of Aristotle and Lucian. His ideas gave him no rest and he could not check his wit. Like Molière's Scapin, he had to be up to his knavish tricks and jokes, counting, if the worst came to the worst, on being able to deny everything. For he was always anonymous. The conditions of the time made it necessary for him frequently to conceal his identity, and usually he got a great deal of fun out of doing so.

To be sure, he wrote not a single line against the King; without batting an eye, he swallowed the coarse insults that came from him. But he could not resist the pleasure of taking the skin off of poor "Marsyas," Maupertuis, who had tried to rival him, and whom the King had called "Apollon."

Maupertuis had just published a number of brief essays under the title *Letters*. These were full of ridiculous speculations and theories.

He proposed:

That a vast hole should be dug to reach the center of the earth,

that a Latin city should be built, where sermons, lawsuits, plays, everything should be conducted in Latin—so that young people could be sent there, and easily taught more Latin than they could otherwise learn in a lifetime,

that the brains of great men should be dissected, to see if they were better developed than the brains of other people,

that physicians should be paid only if the patient recovers, etc.

This book drove Voltaire wild with its absurdities and paradoxes. The result was the famous pamphlet: *The Story of Dr. Akakia and the Native of St. Malo.*

This witty little book does not strike in any respect at Maupertuis as a private man, and is free from invective or coarseness.

The most vicious personal ridicule in the whole book is Voltaire's harmless joke of calling Maupertuis a Laplander, born in St. Malo, because he was proud of his journey to Lapland.

Akakia, a physician, is worried about the plan of never getting any fee if his patients do not recover: "He wants to let us physicians starve to death; he treats us like his publishers."

Akakia is alarmed about the hole which is to be dug to the center of the earth; it has to have a circumference equal to all Germany, which would disturb the equilibrium of Europe. The truth lies indeed at the bottom of a fountain; but to dig this fountain would be too difficult.

In the Latin city Akakia is afraid that the cooks and laundresses would also have to understand Latin, and if they should commence to learn Latin grammar nothing would be cooked and no shirts would be washed.

Now and then Voltaire does Maupertuis injustice. His clear yet not deep understanding was not sufficient for some of the President's ideas. Maupertuis had said that space was only a concept of our senses. Voltaire informs him that every schoolboy knows that space does not exist solely in our senses, like tone and color. Here it is Voltaire who thinks like a schoolboy.

The great difficulty lay in getting the pamphlet published.

Royal permission was necessary and Frederick, knowingly, would never give that. Voltaire pretended that he wanted to publish an answer to the attacks which a theologian of Zürich, Zimmermann, had written against the King and himself as freethinkers. *Akakia* was printed with this permission.

Maupertuis owing to an illness was absent from the King's suppers. Frederick and Voltaire acted as though nothing had come between them and one evening when the idea came up to compile a sort of encyclopedia to be written by the group, Voltaire at once began good-humoredly to send the King one article after another: Abraham, Ame, Athéisme, Baptême. From this sprang Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique* which some time later was the source of the *Encyclopedia,* the great work of Diderot and D'Alembert.

One can easily imagine Frederick's resentment when he discovered that he had been deceived and that *Akakia* was published in Potsdam. He saw at once who was the author.

He sent his valet to Voltaire to learn where the edition was hidden. Voltaire knew nothing about it.

Meanwhile the printer confessed, so it was no longer any use for Voltaire to play the innocent. He then tried to carry the whole thing off as a joke. But the King summoned him, had the edition burned at the palace, and forced Voltaire to sign an agreement: As long as His Majesty bestowed upon him the grace of letting him live at the palace, he was not to write against the government of France, against other rulers or famous writers, but was to behave as was proper for a writer who had the honor of being His Majesty's Chamberlain.

Voltaire had to sign, of course; but he was nevertheless resolved to carry his fight through. His *Akakia* was already on the way to Dresden to be printed there. Soon afterward the book was joyfully read in Berlin, where Maupertuis was disliked for his arrogance.

Frederick raged. Maupertuis was to have satisfaction. The copies that could be seized were burned by the hangman at street corners of Berlin, and before the house in the Taubenstrasse, in which Voltaire lived. This ridiculous brutality was enacted by Frederick on Christmas evening, 1752, eighteen years after Louis had had Voltaire's *Lettres Philosophiques* burned. In this the Kings resembled each other.

Frederick still looked on Voltaire as a great writer, but as most malicious.

Voltaire sent Frederick his chamberlain's key, his Order of Merit and his appointment as Royal pensioner, and wrote devotedly, almost tenderly:

> Je les reçus avec tendresse,
> Je vous les rends avec douleur;
> C'est ainsi qu'un amant dans son extrême ardeur
> Rend le portrait de sa maîtresse.

The same day everything was returned to him.

4

Voltaire had only one thought: to get away. But that was very difficult; he could find no excuse except the demands of his health. Frederick disliked to see anybody leave his entourage; he could not dispense with Voltaire.

Voltaire for a quarter of a year had to play the rôle of an invalid. His assertion to Frederick that he needed the baths in Plombières made no impression. The King answered that there were excellent baths near by, in Glatz, in Silesia. But finally Frederick had to yield: Voltaire was at liberty to leave his service whenever he pleased. In a letter he demands, however, that Voltaire first return his chamberlain's key, his appointment to office, his Order of Merit, and a volume of poems which the King had loaned him. The letter expresses the strange belief that Voltaire now would begin to attack his writings.

Unfortunately, with all the other matters he had to consider, Voltaire forgot to return what had been demanded; he forgot all the more easily seeing that upon his arrival at Potsdam from Berlin, he was closeted with the King for two hours in friendly conversation, and after that was entertained at supper for six successive days.

One morning when the King was reviewing his troops it was reported to him: "Monsieur de Voltaire awaits Your Majesty's orders." The King turned and said: "Well, Monsieur de Voltaire, you really want to go?"—"Sire, I am forced to go by matters that I cannot postpone and especially the condition of my health." "Monsieur, I wish you a pleasant journey." —They both knew that they would never see each other again.

In Leipzig, where Voltaire made a stay, he added a little comic episode to *Akakia*. Then Maupertuis lost his head entirely and wrote threatening Voltaire that he would get hold of him, if he continued such writing. The next day the following announcement came out in the *Leipziger Zeitung:*

"A certain man has written to an inhabitant of Leipzig a letter in which he threatens him with murder. As attempted murder is not in keeping with the privileges of the Leipzig Fair, we request everybody to inform us should this man appear within the walls of Leipzig. He is a philosopher of distracted appearance and hurried stride; his eyes are small and round and so is his wig; he has a flat nose and a fat, moon face, with a repulsive, smug expression. He always carries a dissecting knife to take great people apart. Whoever gives information about him, shall receive a reward of one thousand ducats which is to be called for in the Latin city which this gentleman is having built."

Frederick wrote in a letter to his sister: "Many are sentenced to be broken upon the wheel, who do not deserve it as much as Voltaire."

The King began to be possessed with the fear that Voltaire might make such a use of his letters as he himself had earlier done with those of Voltaire. He was especially nervous that he might show in France the verses in which Frederick had made fun of the French ruler and ministers. Voltaire had nothing of that sort in mind, nor did he have anything with him on the journey that had been written by the King.

In Frankfurt Frederick's anger overtook Voltaire and here was enacted the burlesque epilogue to their once perfect companionship, which became a turning-point in Voltaire's inner feelings for the Prussian King.

Frankfurt at that time was a Free City. Frederick had no authority over it. But Voltaire had scarcely arrived there when he was arrested by the Prussian resident, Herr Freytag, who forbade him to continue his journey until he had returned to the King of Prussia the things that belonged to him. This meant above all the King's poems. Voltaire thought that the book might be packed in a box which he had left in Leipzig. On June 1, he wrote for the box; he had to wait until June 18 before it came. Now Voltaire thought that he could resume his journey. But Freytag could not believe that he had been ordered to arrest this French criminal just because of a book. The order spoke vaguely of royal letters or manuscripts.

So Voltaire was arrested again.

He tried to escape, sneaked off with his secretary and got into a hired coach with one servant who carried a traveling bag. But they were missed, detected, overtaken and brought back in triumph. This flight made the criminal still more dangerous in Freytag's eyes.

Voltaire's niece, Madame Denis, who had been waiting for her uncle in Strassburg, but who now came to join him, the secretary, and the servants, all were arrested. Two soldiers were put in front of the house door, four others were set to watch Voltaire, and four stood in front of Madame Denis' room; a policeman by the name of Dorn was even stationed in her bedroom during the night, although the poor woman, as Voltaire said, had never corrected verses for the King of Prussia.

Finally, on July 5th, the authorities came to the aid of Voltaire and after five weeks of arrest he was permitted to continue his journey. But the Prussian official demanded of him a considerable sum to cover the cost of board and lodging during the time he had been in captivity. A strange manifestation of Prussian avarice.

Certainly things had gone further than Frederick had intended, but even though he was not to blame for these stupidities, he had no one punished.

5

As a result of these occurrences Voltaire acquired a bitterness, almost hatred of Frederick. In the *Mémoirs,* written six years later, but which were published only after his death, he vents his spleen in vicious, cutting mockeries.

Frederick, too, kept a certain resentment, but it was easier for him to overcome it, as he had not been humiliated.

When the correspondence had been resumed he wrote to Voltaire: "You wronged me, absolutely. I have forgiven everything, I even want to forget everything." And then:

"Do you wish compliments? I will tell you the truth: I esteem you the greatest genius that centuries have created; I admire your poems; I love your prose, especially the brief frivolous parts of your miscellaneous writings. Never before has any writer had such perfect tact, such a sure and refined taste. You are charming in conversation; you know how to instruct and entertain at the same time. You are the most fascinating person I know, able to make yourself loved by anyone you wish. You have so much charm in your wit that you can offend and be forgiven at the same time. In short, you would be perfect, if you were not human."

Later, when Frederick made great efforts to calm the aging Voltaire, he wrote:

"For man everything depends upon the time he is born. Although I was born far too early, I am not sorry, for I have seen Voltaire, and even though I see him no more, I read him and he writes to me."

One who reads understands that in spite of everything that separated them, these men could not do without each other. They hated and loved each other alternately in the course of a few days, or did both at the same time. After a short time the old charm, the mutual attraction, made itself felt, and the correspondence recommenced, continued for twenty-four years and ceased only at Voltaire's death.

One period seems to me especially worth mentioning: that from June to November, 1757.

In 1756 Austria entered an alliance with France and Russia against Frederick. When Frederick invaded Saxony, Sweden and the Electors joined the alliance. A population of a hundred millions stood against a nation of five millions—after the defeat of Kolin, on June 18, 1757, it seemed as if everything were over with Frederick. He carried with him a phial of swift poison, resolved to use it if his luck should not turn, and he wrote a letter in rhyme about it to his friend d'Argens. It is the poem which begins: *Ami le sort en est jeté*:

"The die is cast. Tired of the misery and bad luck, with which our Mother Nature has filled my life, I shall shorten my days. Farewell, greatness, farewell, divine ambition! I do not seek solace in religion. I know from my teacher Epicurus that the spark of life is not immortal. But strew my grave with roses and myrtles."

In a letter to Voltaire he likens himself to the heroes of liberty, Cato, Brutus, who fell by their own hands.

It is tragicomic that Frederick sends even this poem, in which he describes in bitter earnest his thoughts of suicide, to Voltaire, to have him correct it. With good sense the latter answers that the problem for him is not how to perfect these verses, but how to save the King's life for his own sake and for that of humanity. To distract the King from his thought of suicide he boldly tells him that nobody would compare him with Brutus or Cato: "Nobody is going to look on you as a martyr to liberty. One must look facts squarely in the face. You must keep in mind how many Courts there are who see in your invasion of Saxony a violation of international law." Frederick's death would only be a tremendous triumph for his foes and for the enemies of philosophy.

Frederick answered Voltaire on October 9, 1757, with a fine, manly poem. It begins:

> Je suis homme, il suffit, et né pour la souffrance;
> Aux rigueurs du destin j'oppose ma constance.

Believe me, he says, if I were Voltaire and a private person, I would meet the shift in fortune with equanimity. I know what it means to be disgusted with praise, I know the burden of obligations, and I know a flatterer when I see one. I know how to think, live and die as a King.

As soon as Frederick's sister, the Margravine, informed Voltaire of her brother's desperate intention, he had the idea that the King, to survive, would have to make peace with France. As Voltaire had been friendly, ever since they were in school, with the Marshal of Richelieu, who led the French armies, he advised the King to give him a letter to deliver to Richelieu.

Frederick thereupon wrote a dignified but cleverly flattering letter to Richelieu, and Voltaire delivered it. Richelieu answered Frederick that he had no authority to conclude peace, but that he had sent the letter to his master, King Louis.

And now Voltaire began to work passionately in the matter, not so much because of his friendship for

Frederick—for sometimes he hated him—but because it offended Voltaire's reason that something so precious and rare as Frederick should be destroyed. Also, Voltaire believed that peace was the best thing for France. He knew that Frederick even in the direst straits was an immense power, and France might suffer if this military genius were driven to desperate measures. By bringing together the Cardinal de Tencin and the Margravine de Bayreuth, he tried to influence the Prime Minister, Abbé de Bernis.

But Madame de Pompadour was definitely on the side of Austria. Frederick had written verses ridiculing her, whereas Maria Theresa had sent her a letter filled with professions of her hearty affection. Bernis was a statesman. Frederick received no answer. He could not be surprised at that. He had written of Bernis: "Evitez de Bernis la sterile abondance!" And of the King:

> Quoi! Votre faible monarque
> Jouet de la Pompadour,
> Flétri par plus d'une marque
> Des opprobres de l'amour . . . .
> Cet esclave parle en maître.

Then suddenly he gave France the most humiliating military defeat she had ever experienced. The battle of Rossbach was fought November 5th. With an army half the size of the French he routed first the cavalry, then the infantry, until the entire army took to its heels with Frederick's cavalry in pursuit. He captured 5,000 men, including five generals and 300 officers.

Voltaire writes to d'Argental: "Frederick had only some 20,000 men who were tired out by marches and counter-marches, and with these he destroyed an army of 50,000 men. What shame for our nation. . . . Now Madame de Pompadour can see that I was right when I wrote her: 'The time might come when it would be rather convenient to have a Frenchman at the Court of Berlin.' " . . . And in writing to Thiriot he says: "Posterity will be astonished that an Elector of Brandenburg, after losing a great battle against Austria, after his allies had been completely wiped out, after he had been pursued into Prussia itself by 100,000 victorious Russians, when he was wedged between two French armies who could surprise him at any time, overcame all these handicaps, retained his conquests, and scored one of the most memorable victories of this century. . . . It is not pleasant to be a Frenchman in a foreign country now. We are ridiculed to our faces, as if we had all been adjutants of Monsieur de Soubise."

6

It seems at first as if the relation between Frederick and Voltaire took the course of a peaceful and vivid interchange of ideas for the next twenty years. But if one looks more closely one discovers a gap in the correspondence between November 1, 1760, and January 1, 1765. This time it was the King who severed relations and without adequate reason.

Frederick's anger at Voltaire was aroused because the latter was at work on a *History of Peter the Great,* for which he was eagerly collecting material. As one can readily imagine, the Russian government did not make it too easy for him. But this history was demanded by Voltaire's instinct as a companion work for the *History of Charles XII.* Peter matched his conception of a great man far better than Charles.

Frederick writes to Voltaire: "Please tell me, what is this I hear about your writing the history of Siberian bears and wolves? And what can you say about the Czar that you have not already said in your *History of Charles XII?* I do not want to read the history of these barbarians. I would prefer to ignore the fact that they even lived in our hemisphere." Frederick mentioned this matter again and again, and did not spare strong words.

The other reason that caused Frederick to cease corresponding with Voltaire for years was Frederick's hatred of Louis XV and Madame de Pompadour which found expression in the most mocking verses. And in 1761 Voltaire's *Tancrède* appeared with a dedication to Madame de Pompadour. Although this was carelessly worded with the result that it irritated the favorite, it seemed to Frederick so flattering that he was indignant. He wrote to d'Argens: "The Epistle of dedication was written by a fellow who blows hot and cold, who can mock or flatter to order, regardless of his subject. . . . Compare certain verses in *La Pucelle* with this dedication and admit that only a rogue could dishonor himself by such a two-faced action."

In this judgment Frederick is unfair. Had Madame de Pompadour, whose advances he never answered, been of noble blood, he would have nourished no more prejudice against her than he had against the Duchess de Châteauroux, to whom he wrote repeatedly. Had he not constantly teased Voltaire to let him read the poem on Jeanne, he would never have known of those unfortunate lines which Voltaire did not incorporate in his final edition of *La Pucelle,* and which he was sorry he had ever written, for he really had a very high opinion of Madame de Pompadour and after her death wrote sadly to his friends: "She was one of us."

The correspondence was resumed when, at the end of 1764, Frederick was seriously ill; Voltaire asked after the health of the King and the latter sent him on January 1, 1765, a polite answer.

7

But Voltaire had enough of serving kings by this time. In the republic of Switzerland, he became a king himself, the intellectual monarch of his whole century.

What Voltaire owed to his life with Frederick is difficult to set down precisely. But one can notice it. In the atmosphere around Frederick, Voltaire's philosophical keenness flourished. Frederick's strength of will gave him courage. Until then Voltaire had not been a fighting writer. Since his *Philosophical Letters* (1734), his work had been purely literary or scientific. His attacks on social institutions were masked so that he could deny them if an emergency arose.

Take the astonishing case of his *Mahomet.* It certainly is intended, first to last, as an attack upon revealed religion, but it is so written that Voltaire could, in 1745, dedicate it to Pope Benedict XIV.

Now Voltaire no longer dedicates books to a Pope, although he keeps up good relations with Benedict and when he petitions for relics for the church in Ferney he gets the hair-shirt of his patron-saint, Francis.

The intercourse with Frederick gave him the courage to oppose the belief in any so-called Revelation. The close friendship with Frederick increased his prominence among his contemporaries. For the first time since Aristotle and Alexander, a great writer was the friend and adviser of a King, after being his teacher.

This is not the place to enlarge upon what Frederick was as a monarch. Ruthless in his work as a founder of a state, hard, painstaking and gifted, he created Prussia and through it modern Germany. He was far ahead of his times. In his phrase *Je serai le roi des gueux,* he expressed his intention of founding a kingdom of a kind then unknown.

As a measure of his greatness one may take this: he, and he alone among the Kings, dared declare himself a free-thinker, dared in that dark age to let so-called religious crimes go unpunished and to show on all occasions a heathen philosophical spirit.

None dared this in the nineteenth century, the century of reaction. No Emperor or King—not even Napoleon—no minister in any monarchy—not even Bismarck!

That Frederick dared this, was the work of Voltaire.

It is Voltaire's greatest achievement as an historian that he wiped out superstition and shook the churches which supported it and which were supported by it.

Now he ceases to be merely a thorn in the flesh of the ecclesiastics. In his solitude he works as the great protector of the downtrodden and the outcast. He is their helper, their defender, the one who fights for their rights during life, protects their honor after death. The haughtiest rulers tremble before him, the blood bespattered judges grow pale at the mention of his name. Without his inspiration the *Encyclopedia* would not have been written; without his interference the worldly power of the Catholic church would not have been so undermined that only a dozen years after his death the French Revolution caused it to collapse.

IV

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

1

Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose name has been linked with that of Voltaire by posterity, did not mean much to Voltaire in his lifetime.

Voltaire was more than half a century old, and very famous, when Rousseau first came in contact with him.

The Duke de Richelieu requested Rousseau to adapt Rameau's music to Voltaire's text of *The Princess de Navarre,* for the performance at Court.

Rousseau sends Voltaire the revision: "Monsieur, for fifteen years I have worked to make myself worthy of the regard and care with which you favor the young writers in whom you discover some talent." —He asks him to point out where he has deviated from the fine and true, that is from Voltaire's original ideas.

Voltaire answers like a grand seigneur, very politely, and indifferently: "You combine two talents which previously have always been separated, that of the musician and that of the poet. So I have two important reasons for esteeming you highly and wishing to like you. I am sorry that you are wasting these two talents upon a work which is not entirely worthy of you. But fortunately it is in your hands; you are to decide."

In Rousseau's youth Voltaire had a strong influence upon him. Rousseau said that the reading of Voltaire inspired him with the desire to express himself elegantly and to imitate the "nice coloring" of style. The *Lettres Philosophiques* turned his thoughts to England whence he was to bring, like Voltaire, thoughts that were epoch-making in France. The tragedy *Alzire* so moved him, as a spectator, that he could not breathe, had palpitation of the heart, and was ill for several days.

Rousseau belonged at first to the little phalanx who were called *"philosophes,"* Diderot, d'Alembert, Helvetius, and others who wished to promote free-thinking philosophy and who saw in Voltaire their greatest man.

He left this group when the Academy of Dijon, in 1749, announced a prize contest for the best essay on the question: "Did the Renaissance promote morality?" Diderot asked him: "What attitude do you propose to take?"—"The affirmative, of course." "That is the *pons asinorum,"* answered Diderot, who admired the living conditions in Tahiti. "All mediocrity will take that stand. It is the negative that offers new fields to the thinking brain and the eloquent pen."

This remark startled Rousseau's development. He did not share the innocent belief of the *philosophes* in constant progress in all fields. He was an unusual type, they were the regular members of society. He was a wanderer; they were settled. He was a landscape artist, they loved wild nature, enjoyed the scenery before their eyes, the soil as they felt it beneath their feet. He was a man of instinct, made wretched by doubt, while they, being thinkers, had first to awaken the doubt. He had the natural inclination to respect, as Voltaire had to scoff. In his hatred of doubt he became doctrinaire and dogmatic.

In his books he attacked his contemporaries as parasites of men in high position. "This is the life of all our intellectuals, with one exception, Diderot." Voltaire was given this slap: "Tell us, famous Arouet, how many works of virile beauty have you sacrificed to your finesse, how many great masterpieces has that spirit of gallantry of yours cost you, who are so fertile in producing pretty trifles?"

Voltaire took no notice of this. He did not appreciate that to Rousseau it appeared impossible to be both wit and creative genius. For Voltaire was both.

Voltaire had had a ridiculous skirmish with a Monsieur Rousseau who hissed one of his plays in the Théâtre Français. He thought this Rousseau was Jean Jacques and when he made some remark about his ingratitude, the real Rousseau was moved to write him a dignified letter in which he says at the end: "I am content to live with no reputation, but not with one for dishonesty and I would consider myself dishonest if I did not pay you the respect every writer owes you, and which all those who deserve respect themselves do pay you."

Meanwhile Rousseau began to assume a Diogenes attitude in life, as he had in literature. He changed his style of dress, discarded gold lace on his coat, gave up white stockings, put away his sword, sold his watch, wore a plain wig.—It was unthinkable to discard the wig entirely.

It was thanks to his descent and to his previous life as a lackey and a vagabond that he was content outside the habits of good society. As Madame d'Epinay said: "He could utter a pretty compliment without being polite. He was not French, but Swiss, and the Swiss, who are mountaineers, regard politeness, as some Norwegians do, as a subordinate matter."

Once he had reviled Fashion as sordid display he became the fashion.

He composed *Le Devin du Village*. The King, the Queen and the Court saw the work at Fontainebleau. Rousseau attended the performance in street clothes, unshaven and with his wig uncombed. He failed to meet the King, and lost a pension that was meant for him, because he was too weak to deny himself the chance of going out for a moment while waiting for the audience.

At that time the poor sickly man joined destinies with Thérèse Levasseur, a former waitress who was lacking in beauty and intelligence. She could not read, and did not know the year or the days of the week. This poor creature gave birth to five children, perhaps by Rousseau, perhaps not, all of whom Rousseau took to the foundlings' home. This, however, was a deep secret which was uncovered only much later. Rousseau then gave various reasons for his action, first, that it was the usual procedure, and then, that it was essential to save Thérèse's honor. In further extenuation he claimed that he had acted as a good citizen and father by leaving his children to become laborers and farmers, instead of adventurers and fortune-hunters.

2

At the age of sixteen, Jean Jacques had been converted from Calvinism to Catholicism. When at forty-two he returned to Geneva, he again changed his religion, and was restored to his lost rights of citizenship.

He was received splendidly, and promised to settle the coming spring, that is in 1755, in Geneva.

But just then Voltaire, after his unsuccessful adventure with Frederick the Great, went to Switzerland, ostensibly to seek the advice of the famous Geneva physician, Tronchin, but in reality, as he confidentially admits, "to let his clothes dry after the thunderstorm."

He bought the estate of Les Délices, with Tronchin as go-between; for a Catholic, even if unorthodox, could not become a property owner in the Republic of Geneva. As was his habit, he at once installed a private theater.

Shortly after his return to Paris, Jean Jacques entered the contest for the new prize of the Academy of Dijon: *"The Origin of the Inequalities in Man, and the Fundamental Reasons Therefor."*

He dedicated his book to the Republic of Geneva, and in a long preface he glorifies its institutions. He cannot imagine a better constitution. The authorities are the best in the world. The priests are reverend pastors, devoted protectors of the holy dogmas, etc.

But the book, which proclaimed the equality of all people in a natural state, and which blamed society and civilization for inequality, failed to please the aristocratic society of Geneva. The council answered politely but coolly, whereas Rousseau had expected enthusiasm.

In the book Rousseau followed his paradoxical train of thought and came to the statement "the man who thinks is a degenerate animal." He meant that instinct is an independent force in intellectual life and as it predominates over reason, it is more natural than reason. This could not be doubted, but neither was it sensational. And he wanted to be sensational.

Voltaire considered Rousseau's book on the destructive power of culture a huge joke, but Rousseau was the friend of all the encyclopedists, and Voltaire was too wise a general to disperse his troops. On receiving a copy of the book he replied good-naturedly: "I have received the book which you have written against mankind, and I thank you for it. It is impossible to paint with stronger colors the horrors of the civilization on which in our weakness and ignorance we pride ourselves so much. Never have we been condemned with so much wit. On reading one feels tempted to go on all fours. As it is, however, sixty years since I gave up this habit, I am sorry to say that I am unable to take it up again, and I leave this natural posture to people who are more worthy of it than you and I."

He calls himself a peaceful savage in the seclusion which he has chosen near Rousseau's birthplace. He is sorry to hear of Rousseau's ill health. He should recover in the climate of his native land: "Come and drink with me the milk of our cows, and if you have to go to grass, do it here!"

Rousseau, flattered, thanks him: "When I sent you my poor dreams, I did not stop to think that I was giving you something that was worthy of you; I only wanted to fulfill an obligation, and pay you the homage, which we all owe you as our leader." He thanks Voltaire for the honor he does his native land by settling there, and asks him to enlighten a nation worthy of his instruction, and to teach it to love virtue and liberty.

At last the moment came when Rousseau, who had always professed to despise Paris, was to move to Geneva; but he felt it impossible. He wished to be foremost in Geneva—and Voltaire was there. Voltaire's presence locked the doors of Geneva against him. He asked Madame d'Epinay to let him have her little house, the Hermitage, near Montmorency. The champion of equality accepted the hospitality of a banker's wife. The Spartan defender of virtue was filled with well-being in that overcivilized society that paid the fullest homage to Eros!

3

The earthquake in Lisbon took place in November, 1755. Two-thirds of the city was destroyed and 20,000 people killed. This catastrophe made a very deep impression on contemporary society, caused people to re-examine their views of life. Compare the small impression made upon our time by the eruptions of Pelé and of Etna. The outlook of the world at that time was based on the optimism of Leibnitz: True, God could imagine all kinds of worlds but he was able to create only the best possible; if there are flaws in this world, it is only because a world without them would be impossible.

Very generally people soothed themselves with the thought that this world was the best of all possible worlds.

Now came this wholesale destruction of a city. What did it mean? One could hardly be expected to believe that the 20,000 killed were worse or more sinful than other inhabitants of the city. Where did the hand of Destiny come in here?

Voltaire, like all the unorthodox of his day, had never doubted the existence of a God. He needed a God in his physics, to make the worlds move; he needed a God in his moral code to mete out reward or punishment after death. If He did not already exist He must be invented: Inside of this fence his mental life took place.

But the destruction of Lisbon undermined his optimism; no, everything was not well. And he wrote his poem *Le Désastre de Lisbonne:* All will be well some day—that is our hope. All is well today—that is an illusion. The wise have been mistaken. God alone is right. I dare not to revolt against Destiny:

> Un jour tout sera bien, voilà notre espérance,
> Tout est bien aujourd'hui, voilà l'illusion.
> Les sages se trompaient, et Dieu seul a raison.
> Humble dans mes soupirs, soumis dans ma souffrance
> Je ne m'élève point contre la Providence.

The pastors of Geneva asked Rousseau to reply. He was bitter. He thought Voltaire's attitude ridiculous: "This poor man, who is glutted with fortune and honors, spouts bitterly about the misery of life." He himself, poor and unlucky, will prove to Voltaire that everything is well, that Voltaire's God is a Devil, a creature of evil deeds.

But it is clearly not God's but mankind's fault that Lisbon was destroyed. God meant them to remain in the natural state, to live in caves or scattered huts. Then the earthquake would not have harmed them. But they herded together in great cities. Hence all the misery.

And he addressed Voltaire a long personal letter which he intended to publish later. In it he says: "May heaven keep me from offending the one of my contemporaries whose talents I esteem most highly and whose writings move my heart most deeply; but here it is destiny that is in question, destiny on which I stake everything."

Rousseau hoped for an answer from Voltaire, a dramatic conflict with the best-known man of his times, a tournament in which he would have occasion to appear as the chivalric champion of Destiny.

But Voltaire did not fall into this trap; besides he did not wish the opponents of free-thinking to see the spectacle of two free-thinkers attacking each other. Instead of a controversial theatrical treatise, he sent Rousseau a polite note: His niece is sick and he is taking care of her; he himself is not feeling at all well. Under such circumstances he prefers to put metaphysics aside. But he assures Rousseau that none of his readers esteem him more highly than he, and none—let Rousseau come to Geneva—could love him more heartily.

The real answer was written four years later. It became world-famous. It is called *Candide.*

4

Geneva was dominated by the doctrines of Calvin; plays and theaters were absolutely forbidden. Even puppet-shows were not allowed. When D'Alembert, who was about to write the article on Geneva for the *Encyclopedia,* visited Voltaire, the latter asked if he might insert a few lines about the theater:

"The drama is not permitted in Geneva for fear of the passion for finery, diversion and levity, which it is said to engender. But Geneva ignores the obvious fact that strict laws could be enacted against that sort of thing, and the theater would be left as a good influence upon the public taste."

The objections of that time against the theater are so strange that we smile: it engenders a passion for finery. The defense seems no less strange to us.

How stubborn are European prejudices. After Shakespeare's death Puritanism closed all the theaters in England to his work. Port-Royal's condemnation of the theater induced Racine to give up writing for the stage. More than a hundred years after Shakespeare's time the Pious Party in Copenhagen did the same thing to Holberg that Calvinism did to Voltaire in Geneva.

The clergy of Geneva were in a ferment over the article in the *Encyclopedia;* Tronchin tried in vain to induce D'Alembert to withdraw it, and at first got a refusal from Rousseau when he asked him to intervene.

But when Rousseau had an inkling that Voltaire might be the author, he availed himself of the opportunity to make his rival angry, and wrote his *Letters on the Drama.*

He could not be stayed by the thought that it was not exactly fitting for a dramatic writer, librettist and opera composer to point out the menace of the theater. He was blind to everything except the desire to attack Voltaire. Voltaire had become the abstract of all he hated: Voltaire was noble, agreeable, gay; he himself clumsy, disagreeable, dour.—Voltaire was bright and maliciously witty; he himself earnest, and of a gloomy genius.—Voltaire was not pious, but liked order; he himself pious and rebellious.—Voltaire was practical and far-sighted in his political opinions; Rousseau an idealist and a revolutionary.

Finally Voltaire was everything that Rousseau envied: he was wealthy, happy and admired.

Rousseau attacks dramatic art as later did Tolstoy his great successor: tragedy is pernicious. The spectators' hearts are moved by invented sufferings, which hardens them to those that are real. Comedy is pernicious. It does not teach us not to be vicious, but not to be ridiculous. Molière's theater is the school of vice. Molière subjects his Alceste, a most upright man, to ridicule. The establishment of a theater in Geneva, a little town of 20,000 inhabitants, would destroy the city. It should have open-air festivals, parades, shooting-matches, and sailing contests. The drama is innocuous in a polluted city like Paris, but not in innocent Geneva.

Surely, his village clergyman, with the spectacle of dancing girls, had a more pernicious effect upon virtue than Molière's Misanthrope. But all this, says Rousseau, was provoked by Voltaire, even though he takes care not to list Voltaire's *Cesar's Death* and *Brutus* among the harmful plays. Voltaire remained silent.

The citizens of Geneva were delighted. Voltaire with his private theater suddenly became a bogieman. He was publicly jeered. His estate was plastered with threatening and libellous placards. So he resolved to leave the place, and sold Les Délices at a great sacrifice in order, as he writes, "to keep from being burned by the priests of Baal or Basle."

He bought two estates, Ferney and Tournay, across the border; and built two theaters. He gave private performances regularly, in Tournay, and the aristocracy of Geneva thronged the hall of his castle to see them, and even, some of them, to play in them again and again.

5

During the hiatus in the relations between the two great writers, important events occur in Rousseau's life. He falls in love with the Vicomtesse d'Houdetot and has the crazy idea that she loves him. He annoys her in vain. Her lover, Saint-Lambert, who is away at garrison, receives an anonymous letter which warns him. Rousseau is so foolish as to accuse Madame d'Epinay of having sent it, though unquestionably it came from Thérèse; he sends rude letters to his benefactress, and on top of that gets the notion that she is pregnant and that she wishes to blame the paternity on him instead of on her lover, Grimm, who is the real father. He complains to Diderot about this wickedness.

There follows a break with Madame d'Epinay, with Madame d'Houdetot, with Saint-Lambert, with Grimm and even with Diderot, because the latter wrote in the preface to *Le fils naturel:* "Only bad people are lonely," and Rousseau imagined that this was meant for him.

Thus Rousseau broke with the entire philosophical party, and the salons where the *philosophes* were hated opened their doors to him.

He, who had flung so many accusations at the nobility, who had shown himself so uncompromising toward literary pirates, became the guest of the Marshal de Luxembourg and his wife, the Duchess, at their château of Montmorency. The Duchess, who was notorious for her levity, had by this time been deserted by her adorers; her beauty had vanished; but she had a good brain and was well educated, and she was enthusiastic about Rousseau. At her house gathered the most prominent society of France, and there he met daily the Prince de Conti, a Bourbon, who became his protector, and the Countess de Boufflers who, learned and well read, held Rousseau in high esteem. As was his habit, he imagined that the Countess was in love with him, but because of his respect for Conti he restrained himself.

While Voltaire moved in high society with absolute unconstraint, Rousseau behaved awkwardly and rudely. He returned a piece of game which the Prince de Conti sent him. The Countess wrote: "The Prince does not think much of your fastidiousness, not that he finds anything false about it, but he fears that others might take it as an affectation."

In this circle Rousseau talked against Voltaire and filled his letters with violent attacks. But Voltaire continued to ignore it. He even offered Rousseau, several times, an estate which he had bought adjacent to his own.

For Rousseau had not yet forced Voltaire to take him seriously. To be sure, Rousseau had annoyed him when by his appeal to the medieval conception of the theatér as a place of sin, he had hindered the private performance of Voltaire's own plays acted by young dilettantes in the hall of the château, and finally made those performances impossible. Never had Voltaire seen in Rousseau a rival. But Jean Jacques had always studied Voltaire, admired and imitated, hated and nagged him. Now he felt that they were fundamentally opposed as he, Rousseau, was the representative of a new principle.

The two militant spirits were not suited to live and work together. The one, the opponent of the Catholic Church, of the Inquisition, and of political tyranny, taught his contemporaries a new and critical way of looking at things, and for the first time turned satire into a weapon which can only be compared with the deadly discovery of gun-powder. The other, the fanatical preacher of penitence, the prophet of democracy, taught his contemporaries a new way of feeling, in particular a new way of feeling nature, and also a new way of thinking, which subordinated judgment to instinct.

One was first an intellectual awakener, the introducer of Newton, Locke, and Shakespeare, later the intellectual guardian of the nation.

The other was a eulogist of wild nature, an apostle of individuality, from whom sprang first the Revolution, then Romanticism.

Each exercised an influence that remained active for centuries, an influence the like of which had not been wielded since ancient times.

Voltaire was the intellectual food of generations. Courier, Byron, Heine, Edmond About, and Anatole France, go to him as a source. Rousseau has disciples like Tolstoy and Strindberg in our century. He was the progenitor of Chateaubriand and George Sand, of Herder and Goethe, whose *Werther* is descended from *La Nouvelle Heloïse,* and Schiller, whose poem

Rousseau glorifies the one who elevated mankind above Christianity.

Several times Rousseau asked Voltaire for permission to publish the letter on the destruction of Lisbon. Voltaire not wishing to enter a controversy over the existence of Destiny, refused. But as Rousseau had exhibited the letter indiscriminately, it was published in Berlin in 1760.

After excusing himself coolly and drily for the publication in a letter to Voltaire, he adds idiotically:

"I do not like you. You have inflicted upon me, your enthusiastic disciple, the deepest grief. You have polluted Geneva as a reward for the refuge it gave you. You have estranged my countrymen from me as thanks for the praises I have wasted upon you. You make residence in my native land impossible for me and you force me to die abroad, while every honor a man can achieve is bestowed upon you in my native country. I hate you because you have wished me to."

Voltaire answered never a word, but wrote to D'Alembert:

"I wish that Rousseau were not completely insane, but he is. He has written me a letter for which he deserves his own prescription of exposure in the rain and a diet of raw meat."[1]

6

At that time a small scandal rocked Geneva. A woman who, despite her irregular past, was supposed to be as virtuous as she was brilliant and pretty, and whom Voltaire had called one of the two female geniuses that ever existed, Sappho being the other, was caught by her husband with a lover.

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[1] (12 janvier 1803) Le premier Consul: Quelle différence de ce qu'on écrit aujourd'hui à Voltaire. Plus je lis Voltaire, plus je l'aime. C'est un homme toujours raisonnable; point charlatan, point fanatique. J'aime aussi beaucoup son histoire quoique on la critique. La Pucelle ne vaut rien à la jeunesse; mais elle égaye les gens mûrs. Jusqu'à seize ans je me serais battu pour Rousseau contre les amis de Voltaire. Aujourd'hui c'est le contraire. Je suis surtout dégoûté de Rousseau depuis que j'ai vu l'Orient. L'homme sauvage est un chien.

Roederer III 460.

This turned the pious little city upside down.

Such a thing was unheard of. Who and what was to blame for that? Who but Voltaire and his theater! The council most strictly prohibited any participation in the theatrical performances in Tournay. Nobody dared go there any more.

Voltaire writes to d'Argens: "We have had a cuckold in Geneva. Calvin's little community, whose virtue consists in usury, imagines that wronged husbands occur nowhere else in the world but where there are theaters."

But this time he became angry, and especially so at Rousseau, who sent a steady stream of letters to the pastors in Geneva and incited them against the plays.

7

In 1761 there appeared *La Nouvelle Heloïse,* an epoch-making novel, though a dull one. It differed from the conventional novel of the day in that it did not treat its love theme frivolously; this pleased the women. Furthermore, it talked of virtue, whereas it had long been customary to deal exclusively, and wittily with vice. This again found an enthusiastic reception, especially among the ladies. Rousseau maintained that there were few women whom he could not have conquered had he tried. He thought himself irresistible, although he had never won anybody but Madame de Warens, and Thérèse, two women without the least resistance.

The book was directed against the *philosophes* as well as against the faithful adherents of the Church. Against Voltaire's creed, which was irreligious without being atheistic, Rousseau set up his own, which was religious without being Christian.

Voltaire became still more angry. To him Rousseau was now nothing more than a wretch who had deserted his friends.—What a pity, that a man should be born with a few half-developed talents!

Voltaire wrote a number of satirical letters concerning *La Nouvelle Heloïse,* which he could make the Marquis de Ximenés sign and publish, because he had once stolen and published one of Voltaire's manuscripts and thus was dependent upon him. The work is trenchant, like everything Voltaire wrote. It draws attention to numerous grammatical and other faults in the novel, but it leaves a perfunctory impression. There is not a trace of appreciation of the valuable new material made use of by Rousseau, the enjoyment of natural scenery and of a simple, unaffected mode of life. Voltaire should have pointed out that it had been a thousand years since the earth, its air and its fragrance, its colors, and its contours, had been portrayed as vividly as in Rousseau's work. He should have contrasted it to his own epic, the *Henriade,* in which not one single blade of grass could be found.

Voltaire made fun of the theoretical and impractical in Rousseau's work, for example his plan for everlasting world peace. Voltaire represents the Emperor of China as ordering all sovereigns to keep peace, under penalty of making the first violation of his edict the subject of a pamphlet by Jean Jacques.

In 1762 appeared Rousseau's two chief works, *Emile* and *Le Contrat Social.* The first is a book on education, and the second is the doctrine of the common ideal of nations and races, and the equality of men.

As there was no such thing as freedom of the press at that time, all writers remained anonymous; even Montesquieu did not admit the authorship of so purely scientific a work as *L'Esprit des Lois.*

Instead of conforming to this usual practice, Rousseau stubbornly put his name on the title page of *Emile,* which was later brought up against him by the state prosecutor as an unheard-of piece of impudence.

His work, whose valuable parts are copied from Locke's *Thoughts on Education* (translated into French in 1728), contained Christian morality without Christian dogma. He reproached mothers for not nursing their children themselves. Nurses, he said, simply hung their charges on a hook when they cried.

No man, said he, who did not fulfill his paternal duties, had any right to become a father. This immediately after he had taken his fifth child to the foundlings' home.

The Parliament of Paris, which was prosecuting the Jesuits, wished to prove its impartiality by prosecution in the opposite direction. So it pronounced *Emile* to be a work "which dares to deny the truths and prophecies of the Bible and wishes to set aside the evidence of miracles recounted in the holy books.

"The book shall be torn and burned by the executioner, and the author shall be thrown in prison."

Simultaneously, both books were torn and burned in Geneva, and Rousseau was declared under arrest if he should appear.

To Rousseau's disappointment the citizens were perfectly content with the council's decree.

D'Alembert advised Rousseau to flee to Neufchâtel, province of the Prussian King, ruled by the Scotch Lord Keith, "My Lord Maréchal," himself an exile.

Rousseau had scorned Frederick. Under his portrait in Montmorency he had written: "He thinks like a philosopher, but acts like a King."

Frederick not only gave him shelter, but sent him a large sum of money and offered him a villa, corn, wine, wood. Rousseau, with the pride of the "poor-but-proud," would accept none of it: "It would be impossible for him to sleep in a house that had been built by the hand of a King."—Thus he steadily refused the gifts, which the practical Thérèse accepted behind his back.

8

Voltaire was seated at breakfast when the mail from Paris brought him the news of the prosecution of Rousseau. He burst into tears and said: "Let him come here, he must come! I shall receive him with open arms. He shall be master here more than I. I shall treat him like my own son."

He promptly wrote an invitation to Rousseau. As he did not know his exact address, he sent copies to seven different places, so that at least one should be sure to reach him.

Rousseau never answered and later was ashamed that he had not.

Nemesis hung over him. Some time before he had written his attack on D'Alembert, decrying the drama, in order to please the clergy of Geneva. Now the same preachers were burning his book and threatening him with prison.

But his mania held. He imagined that Voltaire was to blame for the attitude of Geneva, and told everyone so.

But Voltaire said Rousseau was a Diogenes who at times expressed himself like a Plato. "There are half a hundred pages of *Emile* which I would like to bind in morocco leather."

In every visitor who came to see him in Motiers, Rousseau fancied he saw a spy from Voltaire. He was positive he recognized his style in every anonymous letter he opened. Nevertheless, in 1763, Voltaire made another attempt to effect a reconciliation, this time through Rousseau's close friend Moulton, who was visiting Voltaire during his fight for the retrial of Calas, the most glorious deed of his life.

Rousseau declined, and called Voltaire a clown.

He also refused to take the part of the persecuted French Protestants. He said they did not deserve any sympathy from him, after the way the bigoted Protestants of Geneva had treated him.

He would not, indeed, could not, bring himself to join Voltaire as an advocate of tolerance. He was the champion of a state religion which took no account of the commandment to "love thy neighbor."

About this time Rousseau always wore Armenian attire. He had met an Armenian tailor in Montmorency. The costume consisted of jacket, caftan, lined cap, and gaudy belt, and was splendid enough not to be mistaken for a dressing-gown.

9

When the public prosecutor of Geneva wrote a book, *Lettres de La Campagne,* in defense of the

Council's attitude to Rousseau, the latter answered with the *Lettres de la Montagne,* which is a violent satire against the government and the religion of Geneva: The Protestants had become persecutors instead of persecuted. Since the Reformed Church had appealed to the right of free research, they had to put up with any interpretation of the Scriptures.

The book contained a witty passage on Voltaire, but it was a denunciation. Rousseau stated that Voltaire was the author of the daring *Sermon des Cinquante,* which ridiculed belief in the New as well as in the Old Testament. This was a work that Voltaire had always stubbornly disowned.

This denunciation, which exposed Voltaire to the most serious dangers, made his resentment boil over. "It is infamous," he writes on January 4, 1765, "to denounce and slander one's own colleague and without reason."

Voltaire so far had paid very little attention to the burning of his writings. He was always anonymous; he lived outside the jurisdiction of Geneva and had nothing to fear.

But now Geneva was full of irritation. Voltaire was accused of flooding the Republic with scandalous writings. His authorship of the *Letter of a Quaker* was just rumored, when on top of it came Rousseau's denunciation. Now Voltaire was revealed as the author of the *Dictionnaire Portatif* also. The city of Geneva seethed with righteous indignation.

Voltaire tried to play the part of the good citizen, and wrote an indignant letter to the chief of police denouncing *Le Portatif* as most dangerous. Meanwhile he was industriously smuggling heavy packages of the book across the border.

In Paris his situation was still worse. The Duke de Choiseul, the Prime Minister, had declared that the censorship must be made more stringent. The King himself had said: "Can't this man be made to keep quiet!" All letters from Paris reported that the common talk was of getting him away from Ferney and locking him up in the Bastille for the rest of his life.

Voltaire was in deadly terror. But in the midst of his fears he made joke upon joke. He wrote to Helvetius: "One should never publish anything under one's name. I didn't write *La Pucelle,* either, and I shall offer proof that the state's attorney himself is its real author. As soon as any immediate danger threatens me I ask you please to inform me, so I can deny everything with my customary frankness and innocence."

At the same time he wrote officially to Paris: "The King is too just and good to condemn me on the strength of careless denunciations. He will not chastise a weak, sickly old man of seventy-one years upon so indefinite and false a charge."

It was Rousseau's denunciation that placed Voltaire in this distress.

We see Rousseau, first admiring, then envying the glory and wealth that are Voltaire's. This envy is disguised as virtue in the attack on the theater in Geneva, as piety in the attack on the Lisbon ode. Then envy grows into hatred, flaming hatred. This hatred puts on the guise of conscience: Rousseau proclaims himself the bearer of a new idea, of a principle which is radically opposed to the rationalistic Voltaire. The latter's reaction is first one of superiority, then of concealed fury at the treachery. Then comes pity and the offer of help, which is scorned. Then they denounce each other to the authorities.

Goaded and irritated past all endurance, Voltaire flung himself at Rousseau with the leap of a tiger.

Anonymously he published *Le Sentiment des Citoyens,* supposedly written by a Genevese citizen, which advanced convincing evidence of Jean Jacques' faithlessness, godlessness, and blasphemy:

"May a native of our city scoff thus at our priests? Is he a true scholar, who attacks scholars? Reluctantly we are forced to admit he is a man who still bears upon him the marks of his excesses, a charlatan who drags with him from town to town the poor woman whose children he has left at the doors of a foundlings' home."

This was an ignoble stroke, but a deadly one. Scarcely four or five people in Europe at that time knew Rousseau's secret. Nobody had ever supposed that Thérèse was anything more than his housekeeper. Nobody suspected that she had borne children he believed to be his own, still less the fate to which they had been consigned. Whatever else was said against Rousseau, his Puritan virtue—which he mentioned at every opportunity—had gone unquestioned.

Rousseau did not know that Voltaire was the instigator of this exposé, and he sought the author among the Genevese clergy, attacked innocent men and made them enemies.

Rousseau's *Lettres de la Montagne* was forbidden in Paris, was burned in Switzerland and in Holland. He tried to publish his collected works in Neufchâtel. The Council interfered. The pastors proscribed him. Frederick the Great tried in vain to protect him. Even My Lord Maréchal doubted if the theological hatred could be overcome. As Rousseau could not stand the climate in Berlin, Lord Keith wrote to the State Inquisitors in Venice for a refuge for the persecuted man, this was refused. The same reply came from Turin, and from Vienna, where Rousseau's protector, the Prince of Württemberg, had connections. Meanwhile the population of Motiers was stirred up against him; stones were hurled through the windows of his house. Thérèse, to make it look worse, had little boys and girls carry great stones up to the open gallery of the house, to frighten Rousseau. She had had enough of the town. Incontinently he fled.

10

About this time virtuous Geneva was diverted by a comical scandal.

A Monsieur Robert Covelle was sued by a Mademoiselle Cathérine Ferboz for having had an affair with her and having got her with child. He admitted the first charge, but denied the second. In accordance with an ancient custom, he was sentenced to get on his knees and make his apology to God. He refused to kneel. He was therefore sentenced to prison. Again he refused to kneel, appealed to Voltaire for help, and the latter wrote one pamphlet after another on the subject, as well as an epic poem entitled *La Guerre civile de Genève ou les Amours de Robert Covelle.*

As Monsieur Covelle was given a friendly welcome at Ferney at any time, he began to consider himself a famous man. Voltaire made open fun of him, and among his friends he never referred to him except by the biblical expression for his offence: *Monsieur le fornicateur.* The lackeys who had always heard him called thus, but did not know the biblical expression, thought that this was some office in the republic and to the joy of those present always announced with a bow at the folding doors: *Monsieur le fornicateur!*

The citizens took Covelle's part against the Council. In the conflict they sought Voltaire's assistance, for he was on good terms with the French ambassador, who had been appointed arbitrator. Voltaire was content: now Versailles would have a chance to see what a force he had become in Geneva. He wished to reconcile the factions which had been turned against each other by Rousseau. The French ambassador wished to see the theater in Geneva reopened. The Council dared not to resist. With great joy *Tartuffe* was performed.

From this triumphal height Voltaire offered Rousseau peace and reconciliation for the last time, Again it was in vain, although he promised to reinstate him into all his rights in Geneva.

11

Rousseau obtained a passport to cross France. In Paris he was received with indescribable enthusiasm, it was almost as though he were holding court, and despite the risk of arrest, he strutted up and down in the Garden of Luxembourg in his Armenian costume.

England, however, was considered his safest refuge. And the great philosopher David Hume, then a popular secretary of Embassy in Paris, befriended him, took him across the Channel, and introduced him everywhere in London. Parliament received him with honor. At the theater he sat in Garrick's loge. The King and Queen visited the theater to see him.

With Rousseau's permission Hume asked the King for a pension for him and it was granted.

Then curiosity slackened. Thérèse came on to join Rousseau. He wanted prominent society to invite her too. But people were not prepared to throw their social traditions overboard for him.

Hume found an excellent asylum for him in the country in Wootton, where Mr. Davenport put a house and servants at his disposal.

But the adoration lavished upon Rousseau and his constant complaints of persecution irked Horace Walpole, and this witty man wrote an outrageous *Letter from Frederick the Great to Rousseau.*

This letter went through Paris like lightning; Rousseau, however, did not see it. Then the *St. James Chronicle* printed the letter and all the journals spoke sarcastically of Rousseau. He imagined that Voltaire had written the letter and that Hume had published it and he raged against both. Besides that he got the idea that Hume was opening his private correspondence, and called him a traitor and a persecutor.

Hume answered indignantly, and exposed Rousseau as an ingrate. He did not realize that Rousseau was suffering from a mania of persecution, nor did Voltaire, often as he called Rousseau crazy.

Voltaire now took the offensive, and anonymously published his *Letter to Dr. Pansophe,* which makes fun of Rousseau and was well calculated to undermine his reputation especially in England, as it contained a collection of all the careless and foolish remarks Rousseau had made about the English.—Still worse were the notes to this letter, which pitilessly exposed the scarcely decent conduct of Rousseau in his youth, as secretary to the French Ambassador at Venice.

Confused and desperate, Rousseau fled to France, and lived there peacefully for several years.

12

In 1770 Madame Necker had the idea to erect a statue to Voltaire during his lifetime.

Rousseau wrote from Lyons to Monsieur de la Tournette: “I hear that it is planned to erect a statue to Monsieur de Voltaire, and that all who have become known by printed works are entitled to take part. I have paid dearly enough for the right, and I beg you urgently to permit me to enter my name as a subscriber.” Then he sent two louis d’ors and a letter to D’Alembert:

“I hear that all those who have gained recognition by printed work are permitted to take part in this project. I make bold to claim this honor.”

When Voltaire learned of this he tried hard to have the sum returned. His friends, the *philosophes* who frequented the house of Madame Necker, also considered that Rousseau should be refused, as Fréron had been, who likewise wished to contribute. But D’Alembert, for excellent reasons, would not allow that.

Eight years later Voltaire died, and Rousseau one month after. They never became reconciled.

They made one of those contrasts which history sometimes likes to bring on in pairs.

Often such opposites clash, but in a case of necessity can be reconciled, as Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, or more recently Hugo and de Musset, Björnson and Ibsen.

Sometimes they are irreconcilable, like Erasmus and Luther, Corneille and Racine, Byron and Southey, Oehlenschläger and Baggesen, Heine and Borne, Wergeland and Welhaven. Only rarely do two great contemporaries feel for one another a lifelong attachment like that of Petrarch and Boccaccio. Equally unusual is it that a long-nourished antipathy turns into friendship. Goethe and Schiller furnish the great example.

In Voltaire common sense was so highly developed that it became genius.

Rousseau was diametrically opposite. In him the irrational instinct became an exalted genius that gave him his creative power, his joy in life and nature.

The things each attacked were wiped out through their efforts. Voltaire broke down the religion of the old régime, Rousseau its society.

V

IN SWITZERLAND

1

In July, 1753, after Voltaire had escaped Prussian imprisonment in Frankfort, he was splendidly received in Mainz. The Elector gave feasts in his honor at the palace, and four of his plays were performed. So it really does not seem as though the misunderstanding between him and the King of Prussia had any effect upon his position in Germany. Next he went to Alsace and lived on French soil for several months, without molestation. This led him to think that his native land would be glad to see him return.

He was, however, soon forced to change his mind. In Colmar he learned that in The Hague, Jean Néaulme had published, without his knowledge or consent, a short history of the world, which he had written for Frederick the Great fifteen years ago. It was said that the manuscript was part of the plunder taken after the battle of Sohr and that it had been sold for fifty louis d'ors by the chamberlain of Prince Charles. However it may have come into the possession of the publisher, by robbery or theft, its printing exposed the author to great danger.

Not only were there errors and inaccuracies in the manuscript, but the text had in many places been so tampered with that it could easily be construed as an attack upon the French authorities. In one place, for instance, Voltaire had written: "In this respect historians are like certain tyrants of whom they speak, who sacrifice the well-being of the entire human race to that of a single individual." Here the word "tyrants" had been replaced by "kings," which would have made it very difficult for Voltaire's friends at Court to take his part.

On top of this, fragments from *La Pucelle,* which also had been looted from the baggage of the King of Prussia, turned up in Vienna for publication. The *Outline of World History,* however, was sufficient. It had turned the entire clergy of France against him, and his case was hopeless.

He did not know that his old school friend the Prime Minister, the Marquis of Argenson, had made a note in his diary: "August 8, 1753. The poet Voltaire is refused permission to return to France. France wishes by this little courtesy to please the King of Prussia, while in more important matters she opposes him."

Not only was Voltaire's return to Paris out of the question, but the Jesuits, whose influence was great in Alsace, were resolved not to permit him to stay there. A few years before, in 1750, in the largest public square in Colmar, an autodafé of all copies of Bayle's *Dictionnaire* had taken place. Private citizens who owned the books threw their copies on the pyre.

Voltaire as usual did everything that was asked of him to appease the ecclesiastical powers. He went to Mass, partook of Holy Communion. He wanted to recover the right to return to Paris and settle down in France. He also could not run the risk of antagonizing Frederick permanently. For a crowned philosopher is far stronger than an uncrowned. He knew that one word from the Prussian Ambassador in Paris could make his return impossible. My Lord Maréchal had frankly told his niece this. The Scotchman was devoted to Frederick, and he said this to make sure that Voltaire should not publish a single poem, a single line attacking the King. Voltaire had no thought of turning his pen against Frederick. He was in trouble enough without pressure from Prussia, because Louis XV wanted to get rid of the trouble maker.

2

Insecure as Voltaire felt, he had no idea how hopeless his position really was in France. It is easy enough to say that he ought not to have made any concessions. If one at that time refused to attend

Holy Communion he was made to do so "*par arrêt de Parlement*."

The Church and King felt the earth quaking beneath them, and as the century progressed their maintenance became more and more difficult. The French Inquisition steadily increased in scope and power. In 1735 Voltaire had written: "In what a century we live! Today LaFontaine would surely be burned." On February 12, 1752, d'Argenson wrote in his diary: "Woe to honest men who do not keep their tongues in check!" On May 7 of the same year, after discussing with D'Alembert the possibility of continuing with the encyclopedia, Voltaire reports that D'Alembert pointed out quite conclusively that any writing done under existing circumstances would have to be concerned entirely with trivialities.—Ten years later D'Alembert, depressed and brokenhearted, writes to Voltaire: "You cannot imagine what degree of fury the Inquisition has reached. The inspectors of thought, who are called royal censors, delete from all books such words as superstition, indulgence, persecution."

If we look back at Voltaire's earlier, comparatively innocent works, we find *Charles XII* prohibited, *La Henriade* so completely suppressed that in 1728 neither silver nor gold could buy a copy in Paris. In 1733 it was "tolerated" but not legally permitted. We saw how greatly the poem *Le Mondain* jeopardized its author. The *Lettres Philosophiques* were burned by the hangman. The *Poème sur la Loi Naturelle* was likewise burned by order of Parliament. The royal edict of April, 1757, made any writing perilous.

In 1724 a resident of Montmartre was burned alive for blasphemy. On September 6, 1758, an officer of justice by the name of Moriceau de la Motte was sentenced to public penance and then to death by hanging because placards had been found in his possession which "seemed intended for public display," and he was strongly suspected of having written the contents of these placards; it is not said what they contained. He was accused of preparing to make "seditious speeches."

In 1768, a poor wretch was sentenced to the galleys because he had asked a bookseller to take off his hands a few books which he had received as payment of a debt. The dealer from whom he had got the books was also sentenced to the galleys. His wife was put in the prison of La Salpetrière. All three were put in the pillory, whipped, and branded.

Everybody can appreciate the danger Voltaire ran when he published his *Dictionnaire Philosophique.* In 1769 his *Histoire du Parlement* was sold the publisher for six louis d'ors. The booksellers had been punished so severely that none dared to sell even a purely historic work.

And it was not in Paris only that his books were burned. *Doctor Akakia* was burned in Berlin, the *Dictionnaire Philosophique* in Geneva.

He lived under the threat of imprisonment to the end of his life. Diderot wrote to his friend, Mademoiselle Volland:

"You will hardly guess for what contemptible reason imprisonment threatens him. It is because of a deep grudge which our good masters have against him for an article in the *Dictionnaire.* . . . They will never forgive Voltaire—I fear these people intend, in spite of all the fame he enjoys, in spite of all his powerful protection, in spite of all his rare talents and fine works, to play a sorry trick on our poor patriarch. Do you know that three days ago it was resolved to put him in prison?"

For a year after Voltaire's death newspapers and periodicals were forbidden to write about him.

One has to bear these facts in mind in order to understand occasional actions on his part that otherwise might seem cowardly. It is hard for us to realize that the greatest men, those considered the purest and most pious, were frequently driven to evasions far worse than any Voltaire ever practised, he who finally revolutionized these conditions and the whole century.

All the best French writers denied the authorship of their works, as he did. Not only the writers on secular matters like Rabelais, La Rochefoucauld, and Pierre Bayle, but also religious writers, like the leaders of Port-Royal, and Saint-Cyran, who would not admit the authorship of *Petrus Aurelius*, and even Pascal, who stooped to dissembling and used ambiguity to deny the authorship of *Les Provinciales.*

In the same spirit Racine, in a letter to Madame de Maintenon, of March 4, 1698, denies that he is a Jansenist. He says that he is sorry to learn that people are representing him as such to the King. By this facile lie Racine succeeded in denying his Jansenist friends when they were in trouble. Compared to these tricks, Voltaire's anonymity and denials are no more than a parade which he knows is recognized as such and cannot deceive any one. They are a mask which he always carries around and with which he sometimes covers his ears and mouth, knowing perfectly well that his eyes betray him.

In that century in which the thinker had to fight for his liberty he was the only one who never lost his courage. He could have lived in Paris peacefully had he consented to be silent, but he would not be silent. In many years he was the only one who would not be silent. Copernicus is silent all his life. Galileo recants his doctrine. Descartes suppresses his essay on physics when he learns of the trial of Galileo. Fontenelle renounces history and criticism. Fréret is silenced by his stay in the Bastille. He is put in prison for his address "*Sur l'origine des Francs*" which he delivered at his inauguration in *l'Academie des inscriptions.* This decides him to forsake all work concerned with history. The Marquis de Mirabeau is cured of his ideas of reform after being exiled to Bignon. D'Alembert finally loses his courage, and remains deaf to the exhortations of his friends, not to drop the work on the encyclopedia.

Voltaire says what he thinks. His life is action. He does not write for the sake of writing or for honor or for money; he writes because of an inner impulse, and to produce action in others.

3

What did it profit Voltaire for the Margravine of Bayreuth to visit him in Colmar, to treat him with the greatest cordiality and to make the greatest efforts to eradicate the impression of her brother's harsh behavior? His attitude toward Frederick could never again become one of friendship and confidence. What did it profit him that he frequently met Richelieu at Plombières, where the two friends, who according to Sénac de Meilhans had become very similar in gesture, in voice and in accent, plotted, that Richelieu should use his influence with Madame de Pompadour to smooth the path for Voltaire's return to Paris? Louis XV could not be made to relent.

The King of France never missed Voltaire for five minutes. The King of Prussia, on the other hand, missed him so keenly and felt so lonely after Voltaire and most other members of the Round Table had left, that his courtiers looked for a substitute. Finally they heard of a Chevalier Masson, captain in the Briqueville regiment, who was reputed to be an especially bright and original man. Frederick asked Louis XV for him. He came, dined several times at the King's table, but was so far from comparable to his predecessor and made so many little lapses from good form that the King, having promised him a pension, paid it for twenty years without seeing him again.

What Voltaire's position was in France, however, he learned best when he went to Lyons to see his old friend, the Cardinal de Tencin. The interview lasted scarcely a minute. The Cardinal told Voltaire that he was unable to invite him to supper, because Voltaire was in bad repute at Court. The poet got up and left. —Years passed before relations were renewed between them. This occurred when Voltaire, before the battle of Rossbach, tried through Tencin to bring about a friendly agreement between Frederick and Louis.

It was only a small sop to Voltaire's vanity that the people of Lyons gave him a tremendous ovation at the theater. He felt that France was not for him and he turned to Switzerland.

A few days after he had left Lyons, he arrived in Geneva. He lived for some time in the Château de Praugin near Lausanne, and he liked it so well that he began looking about for a residence.

He sent a letter to the state council in Geneva, asking its permission to live in the territory of the Republic. He explained that his health was poor and it was important for him to be near his physician, Tronchin. The decision of the council permitted the Sieur de Voltaire to reside in the Republic.

Near Geneva he found a wonderful summer residence. For 90,000 livres he bought the Saint-Jean estate. The place delighted him so much that he named it Les Délices. Promptly he threw himself into work he keenly enjoyed. He became bricklayer, carpenter, farmer and gardener, renovating and remodelling everything.

4

It is necessary to dwell for a moment upon the man whom Voltaire mentioned in his petition to the council as his physician. Voltaire had not only absolute confidence in his efficiency, but also great admiration and friendship for him. As far as can be judged he never doubted but that this sympathy was returned. In this he was mistaken. In the numerous comments on Voltaire to be found in Tronchin's letters, one does not find a trace of goodwill, but much criticism and disapproval. This from religious prejudice.

Tronchin's never-ending outbursts of moralizing on Voltaire show that he was far from being a good psychologist. On the other hand, Voltaire exhibits little skill at judging character, for in a quarter of a century he never suspected how little Tronchin esteemed him.

This was the more unjust as the Genevese physician was indebted to Voltaire for a great part of his reputation. Voltaire says about him: "He is a man six feet tall, wise as Æskulapius and handsome as Apollo." But not all of Tronchin's attractiveness was in his looks: his wit and eloquence, says Voltaire, were unsurpassed. As a physician Tronchin seems to have taken due care of Voltaire's health. It was his aim to teach this big child more self-control, school his temper to greater moderation—he might almost as well have undertaken to square a circle. His first letter to Jean Jacques Rousseau after the arrival of Voltaire, who at that time still was on good terms with his later enemy, shows an altogether wrong impression of Voltaire.

"What can be expected of a man who is almost constantly at war with himself, whose heart is always disappointed by his head! His moral condition has since his childhood been so unnatural, that his nature has become an artificial entity that finds kinship in nothing. Of all his contemporaries, he himself is the one whom he knows least. All his relations with other people are in disorder. He wanted to attain more happiness than he was entitled to expect. The exaggeration of his demand has led him imperceptibly into an injustice which is not condemned by laws but is disapproved of by reason. . . . The praises of his admirers have completed what his own immoderate demands had begun; he has become the slave of his adorers; his happiness depends upon them . . . hence, a libel by La Beaumelle angers him more than the applause of a whole theater could please him. And the result? The fear of death (for he trembles before it) does not stop him from complaining about life, and, not knowing whom to blame, he rails at fate, while he should be dissatisfied with himself alone."

Plainly, all the great qualities of Voltaire's character went over the head of this strict and upright Calvinist, who could see only his irritability over trifles and his sensitiveness to libels.

The main cause of all difficulties which disturbed the peace and quiet of Voltaire during his stay in Switzerland was his passion for the theater, his desire to write plays and to perform them in his house before a small circle of invited guests. And in this field Calvin's pious and virtuous herd would not yield.

Even before his arrival the theater had given cause for scandal. In 1748 a professor named Maurice had gathered several young ladies in a private house to play Corneille's tragedy *Polyeucte,* and the council thereafter had ordered the pastors to warn private citizens that any dramatic performance whatsoever was forbidden. In 1752 fifteen barbers' assistants were called before the council and sharply rebuked because they had performed at the house of a tailor, Joubert, the tragedy *Cæsar's Death* by Voltaire.

Great excitement broke out in Geneva when Voltaire wrote *Le Désastre de Lisbonne.* Tronchin wrote about this to Jean Jacques, whose attacks upon Voltaire were precipitated by this poem:

"When he had written it I begged him to burn it. When I traveled to Paris, all our mutual friends jointly tried to persuade him to do so. But they only succeeded in having him soften some of his expressions; you can see the difference if you compare the second text with the first. . . . I hope, however, that he will read your letter about this attentively; if it has no effect it is due to the fact that at the age of sixty one is not cured of a disease which began when he was eighteen."

Tronchin did not understand that Voltaire did not wish to enter a controversy with Rousseau about the goodness of God. He did not consider that such a controversy would be for Rousseau a literary and social asset; for Voltaire it would mean the interruption of a dozen works which he always had in hand at the same time; and besides he knew such an argument would be entirely fruitless. What always annoyed him about any attack was the waste of time when he was forced to answer; whereas his antagonist was only too glad of the prestige that was attached to crossing swords with Voltaire.

5

Les Délices was a place to the poet's taste. He was not willing to leave to pay his respects to Maria Theresa in Vienna, when he was invited. "Happy is he," he writes to Thiriot, in the summer of 1756, "who lives in his own home with his own nieces, his own books, gardens, vineyards, horses, cows, his eagle, his fox and his rabbits that are tame enough to venture right under one's nose! I have all of this, and in addition the Alps which have a wonderful scenic grandeur. I would rather quarrel with my gardener than pay court to kings."

He kept four coaches, a coachman, a postillion, two lackeys, a chamberlain, another servant, a French cook, a kitchen boy and a secretary. Lunch was always elaborate, and not a day passed on which a numerous company did not have lunch as his guests. Occasional poets came from Paris, such as the untruthful Palissot and the pleasant Patu, who in a letter to Garrick gave an enthusiastic description of his visit. Only in London had the young Patu been witness of such perfect hospitality.

From the moment when d'Alembert's article on Geneva was printed in the Encyclopedia, the citizens' joy at having Voltaire with them came to an end.

6

About this time a figure which we have so far met only casually takes a larger and larger share in Voltaire's life; he is accorded more and more admiration until he becomes a fellow-conspirator in the main aims of the great man. He has, like Voltaire, extensive knowledge, genius, and the gift of description. As a character he is less determined. He is Jean le Rond d'Alembert, the illegitimate child of Madame de Tencin and of an engineer, the brother of the poet Destouches. d'Alembert, twenty-three years younger than Voltaire, and Diderot represent the new generation, which continues Voltaire's work, a generation freer from prejudice than his own.

d'Alembert was a naturalist and an educational writer of high rank. He did not suffer from being illegitimate, although his youth had been hard. From the publication of his first work he was a made man. Foreign rulers like Frederick, and Catherine, sought friendship with him and enlightenment from him.

In Parisian society he was a brilliant light.

His long friendship with Mademoiselle de Lespinasse is mentioned by posterity as often as his scientific works.

Julie Jeanne de Lespinasse was begot in an adultery of Madame d'Albon, a prominent lady of Burgundy, whose legitimate daughter was married to a brother of Madame du Deffand. Once when Madame du Deffand was taking a journey through Burgundy she stopped at her brother's house and found this twenty year old girl leading a sad life, overburdened with household duties, and in a dependent position. Madame du Deffand, though very selfish, was one of the most brilliant women of France. She was captivated by the surprising intelligence of the young girl, and took her home. The family was afraid that Julie de Lespinasse would claim the name of d'Albon—to which she was entitled, as her nominal father was married to her mother—and with the name an inheritance. Madame du Deffand was not so considerate as not to stipulate conditions in this matter. She might have saved herself the trouble; for the young woman was as proud as d'Alembert. She had no more thought of laying claim to the name of d'Albon than he had of calling himself de Tencin. And each of them made the assumed name unforgettable.

After ten years of undisturbed life together, a break occurred between Madame du Deffand and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, because the former, who seldom arose before six in the afternoon, complained that her young companion liked to receive the notables who frequented the house an hour earlier, with the result that the first bloom of the entertainment had worn off when Madame du Deffand made her entrance.

Mademoiselle de Lespinasse left the choleric lady's house. Her friends got together and rented her a suitable apartment, and Madame du Deffand was quite chagrined at the exodus from her salon to that of the rue de Belle-Chasse, where Mademoiselle de Lespinasse held court. d'Alembert and her influence upon him made her a focal point of society. Her modest house became the place where d'Alembert met her other friends, Turgot, the Chevalier de Castellux, Cardinal Brienne, the Archbishop of Aix, Boisgelin, the Abbé de Boismont—the brightest men of the time.

All her contemporaries testify to her charm and popularity as a hostess, in spite of the fact that she could not invite anyone to a large dinner because of her humble circumstances.

The foremost salon of the time was that of Madame de Geoffrin. She was a very wealthy lady who kept up a generous program of philanthropy. Every week she gave two large dinners; one for artists: Vanloo, Vernet, Boucher, La Tour, Vien, Lagrenée, Soufflot, Lemoine; one for writers: d'Alembert, Mairan, Marivaux, Marmontel, Saint-Lambert, Raynal, Grimm. The only woman invited was Mademoiselle Lespinasse. All foreign notables wished an invitation to Madame Geoffrin's: the Swede Creutz, Galiani, Hume, Gibbon. She was motherly, understood the nature of each, gave them her guidance. To give and to forgive was her motto. She had no pretension to learning, and no passion. Without knowledge and without passion, she was soothing. Naturally a timid soul, she allowed no violent remarks to be passed at her table.

Obviously, in many respects it was out of the question for Mademoiselle Lespinasse to compete with Madame Geoffrin. But at her home, the camp of the encyclopedists, tempers were not under restraint; there were no restrictions on the freedom of speech, and she had the gift, at all times rare, of drawing detached conversations between individuals to a single subject, thus making the conversation general, so that everybody contributed his opinion to the same topic.

d'Alembert seems to have had an admiration and devotion for Julie de Lespinasse that is comparable to Voltaire's feeling for Madame du Châtelet. Once when d'Alembert was seriously ill, she sat every day at his bedside and nursed him. As he was then living with the honest glazier's widow who had nursed him in his babyhood, and as the physicians advised him to get plenty of fresh air, he moved in with Julie de

Lespinasse. Good society found nothing to object to in this.

But it is not the tender feelings this exquisite woman cherished for her great friend, that have put her name among the great lovers of the eighteenth century. It is the secret love which for five or six years she felt for the Marquis de Mora, a Spaniard, and even more her violent passion for Monsieur de Guibert. In 1809 her letters to him were published in two volumes. These letters have always, and justly, been considered one of the finest and most touching expressions of a passionate love. It is the passion of a fiery woman for a cool man whose attentions are divided among several women. It is the deep infatuation of a forty-year old woman for a thirty-year old man. It is the desire of a brilliantly talented woman for a man who has become the fashion, and who is inspired by his infallible luck with women to take delight in exciting desire.

He never kept a promise that he made. He disappointed the world as he disappointed her. She was consumed by a gnawing passion, of which d'Alembert had not even an idea, and he had to see her die, at the same age at which Emily du Châtelet died.

7

That colossal work, the *Encyclopedia,* the richest arsenal that eighteenth-century science built to combat superstition, was scarcely begun when its two keen and widely learned architects, d'Alembert and Diderot, began to suffer persecution. d'Alembert writes (August 25, 1752) to Voltaire: "This winter we have had to weather a heavy thunderstorm. I hope that at last we shall be able to work in peace. I thought it would be this way: after abusing us at first, they would come and ask us to continue the work. And in this I was not wrong. For a half year I said no. I bellowed like Ajax in Homer, and I can say that I gave in only to unusual pressure on the part of the public. I hope that our holding out so long will provide us a little more peace in the future." Voltaire answered: "You and Diderot are engaged upon a work which will be France's glory, and the shame of those who have persecuted you. Paris is rich in penny-a-line hacks, but of eloquent philosophers I know only you and him."

Soon Voltaire himself became one of the most ardent collaborators on the *Encyclopedia,* and what is especially remarkable: he did so with a modesty which was never renounced; he always speaks as if he were carrying out the orders of his friends, points out that not his knowledge, nor his time, nor his health permitted him to make his articles as perfect as they should be to be worthy of such an undertaking. He sends material for them to use as they wish, field stones which they can hew as needed to fill in this or that breach in the wall. Again and again he insists that this is a case where personal vanity must not enter, that this is a matter of importance for the common good:

"As long as there is a breath of life in me I am at the disposal of the authors of the *Encyclopedia.* I shall always regard it as an honor to be permitted to contribute even though only modestly, to this, the grandest project that the French people and French literature have set for themselves." (December 9, 1755.)

He is not only a co-worker, but also gives guidance and criticism. He deplores the mediocre articles that now and then slip in. In his abhorrence of vagueness, discursiveness, long-windedness, superfluity, he insists that the articles should be kept short and pithy; first a clear definition of the term, then a concrete illustration.

The *Encyclopedia* was a mighty battering ram against superstition and fanaticism. But if it had avowed this as its purpose, its publication would have been promptly forbidden. So d'Alembert, Diderot and Voltaire had to accept articles of theological and metaphysical content that were in their opinion nothing but monks' talk, but which were useful as covers for other articles that contained the truth. When a Minister, like Malesherbes, was a little less intolerant, they had to make the most of it. When judges and clergy, Parliament and bishops, were bickering among themselves, the philosophers could now and then seize the opportunity.

The misery in France was acute. The inhabitants in the country were so starved, that they literally tried to live like their animals, on grass. France's condition found its sharpest expression in the lack of bread.

Voltaire's letters on England had been the first attempt to draw attention to the causes of misery. Now the entire literature was affected by it. The rulers tried to pretend that a hallowed belief was being attacked. But it was not a question of the creed of the clergy. The question was one of the exemptions from taxation.

For all those who aimed at reform, the clergy was the stumbling block. Their power was due to their wealth. They owned one third of French soil. They resisted the Crown and the demands of the people. They were allied with the nobility whose members they numbered among their ranks. They formed a political machine which cloaked its worldliness with the reverence which it was able to command as an ecclesiastical organization. One thing, however, was clear: if the belief on which this reverence was founded were to be undermined a blow would have the force of an earthquake. The disclosure of the Bible as a human document and the breaking down of this document would inevitably bring about the downfall of the Church, and as the autocracy was based upon the Church, its downfall would only be a question of time. On July 23, 1760, Voltaire wrote to d'Alembert, "I wish that you would smash the infamy, that is the main thing. It ought to be reduced to the condition in which it is in England; and you can do it if you want to. It is the greatest service that can be rendered to mankind."

More than twenty years before Voltaire had, in a letter to President Hénault, spoken of the "low and infamous superstition." Then the term "the infamy" disappears from his letters and writings. When it reappears it is not in a letter by Voltaire, but in one of Frederick to him. The King, whose hatred of everything ecclesiastical was more vigorous than Voltaire's, wrote on May 18, 1759:

"You will continue for a long time to hand down laws from your Parnassus at Les Délices, and you will continue at the same time to caress the infamy with one hand and scratch it with the other; you will treat it as you are used to treating me and the whole world."

Voltaire answered: "Your Majesty has reproached me in very fine verses with having occasionally caressed the infamy; good God! I don't do any such thing: I work only to wipe it out completely, and now and then I have been successful in the case of intelligent people."

At the end of 1757, Voltaire wrote to d'Alembert: "I do it like Cato. I conclude every speech with a *Delenda Carthago*. All that is needed to overthrow the colossus is five or six thinkers who can work in harmony. For it does not mean stopping our lackeys from hearing a Mass or sermon; it means emancipating the heads of families from the tyranny of their deceivers. This great mission already shows some progress. The vineyards of truth are cared for by men like d'Alembert, Diderot, Bolingbroke, Hume, etc. Had your King of Prussia (Voltaire no longer calls him "my King") devoted himself to this holy task instead of waging wars continuously, he could have lived happily, and all educated people in Europe would have blessed him."

There is no disparagement of the man of the lower class implied in Voltaire's phrase about the lackey. He had given ample evidence both in word and in deed of the wealth of sympathy he had for the common people. But he believed, as he often said, that those who had to make their living by manual labor could not possibly spare the time or strength to learn enough; that the thinkers should show them the way. And knowing the lack of intelligence of the farmers and laborers of France about the middle of the eighteenth century, one can understand why he did not feel that it would be of any value for some time to approach these classes with an anti-Christian propaganda. Even so, his confidence in the masses grew. On September 28, 1768, he writes: "All over Europe one finds things to astonish one. A revolution of the human mind is taking place, which will have far-reaching consequences."

8

While Voltaire was thus sacrificing himself and his friends to the fight against tradition, which in his opinion was the basis of the infamy, the French Court was considering how it might make him a slave to this tradition. Madame de Pompadour, who was no longer young, and whose beauty had begun to fade with her youth, was looking about to add strength to her position. She knew only too well that nothing but habit tied the King to her. For a long time she had fought against her own cool nature, which could not meet the exacting demands of her master except by the aid of stimulants that were very dangerous to her health. Then she gave this up, and retained his favor by letting younger beauties, who could practice new caresses, but were not especially bright, succeed each other in the little house in the Parc-aux-Cerfs.

Her sole aim was now to secure a safe and honorable position at Court, like that of Madame de Maintenon under Louis XIV. She wanted to be made a lady of the Queen's palace. For this purpose she said and got others to say that every intimacy with the King had long ceased. In order to win ecclesiastical absolution of her sins, she added a pretended conversion, a new devotion. She even went to the Holy Father himself to attain her object.

Although the indignation of the Jesuits and the obstinacy of the Court of the Dauphin forced her to discontinue her exercises in the true Christianity with Père Sacy, she finally succeeded by pretending a desire to return to her husband, who was near death, in forcing the Queen to the humiliation of appointing her a lady of the palace. But while Madame de Pompadour was still attempting to insinuate herself into the Church, she tried to induce Voltaire to do the same. Why should not he be enlightened by the same sunbeam of grace that had enlightened her? And what a triumph for the Marquise to lead the lost, oh, so far lost, sheep back into the fold of the Church!

At the instigation of Madame de Pompadour the Duke de la Vallière approached Voltaire with a proposition for the translation of the psalms of David. He would easily be able to surpass J. B. Rousseau as an ecclesiastical poet. He would give pleasure and instruction to his readers and the greatest joy to Madame de Pompadour. He would equal David, would enrich him. These psalms would be published in a wonderful edition at the printing shop of the Louvre.

Condorcet states that Voltaire was even promised a Cardinal's hat, if he would comply with these wishes —which was scarcely seriously intended. Voltaire makes no comment on the subject, beyond a hint in a letter to Thiriot that he had been asked to render the Old Testament into French verse. The most he ever actually did toward carrying out this suggestion was a free rendition of the *Song of Solomon.*

Madame de Pompadour had no scruples about making use of religion for her own ends. Voltaire was too proud for that.

All he wanted of the French Court was the privilege that other French citizens had, to come back to France and live in Paris. But this was denied him, and continued to be. d'Argenson's diary contains this entry: "July, 1756. The poet Voltaire has asked my brother to grant him permission to return to Paris for business purposes, and he has been refused." Surely, the Count d'Argenson had completely forgotten his school days' friendship with Voltaire. He was as cool to him as he was disagreeable to Madame de Pompadour. Finally she succeeded, after a scene of copious tears and a fainting fit, in turning the King against d'Argenson. Two days later the Minister received a *Lettre de cachet* which read:

"Your services are no longer required by me. I command you to hand in your resignation as Minister of War, together with all the prerogatives of the post, and to retire to your estate in Ormes."

The Count d'Argenson's disgrace wrung no tears from Voltaire. But all the greater was his grief at the death of the Marquis d'Argenson, which occurred about this time. The Marquis had always been the nearer to Voltaire's heart, and he had many times proved himself a dependable friend. Posterity remembers him only for his famous retort in a matter concerning Voltaire: He had occasion once in his capacity as Minister to interrogate Desfontaines as to why he had written attacking his benefactor, Voltaire. *"Il faut que je vive,"* said Desfontaines; whereat d'Argenson replied with the words that became a saying in the French language—*"Je n'en vois pas la nécessité."*

9

Les Délices was a place for the summer. Voltaire spent the winter in Monrion, near Lausanne, a city which he came to like much more than Geneva. Lausanne was more French than Swiss, the best society of the town consisting of French families who were expelled at the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. They retained their French habits and customs, their French politeness and charm. They welcomed Voltaire with the highest respect. They did not have the Huguenot prejudice against the theater. Ancient and modern plays were performed, comedies and tragedies by Voltaire, under his own direction.

In Lausanne Voltaire made the acquaintance of two ladies who were living together, the Countess of Nassau and Mademoiselle Rieu. He probably called because he had heard that Mademoiselle Rieu had a collection of fascinating letters, written by a remarkable woman. Mademoiselle Rieu was the granddaughter of Madame Calandrin, to whom Mademoiselle Aïssé had addressed these letters which are considered one of the greatest treasures of French eighteenth century literature.

Voltaire had known both Mademoiselle Aïssé and the Chevalier d'Aydie. Aside from that he must have been deeply moved to see that there lived, during those years of the Regency in France which were so rich in bestial passion and so poor in love, a young woman capable of the strongest and tenderest love, a love as tender as that of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was violent.

The letters of these two women form the most remarkable love literature of the century. In the midst of an age in which sexual excesses were committed more and more cold-bloodedly, these two women like two priestesses guarded the sacred flame of love.

Without any question Aïssé is the more poetic. The story of her life is like an eastern fairy tale. Monsieur de Feriol, Louis XIV's ambassador at Constantinople, walking one day in the slave market, saw a little Circassian girl, four years of age, offered for sale. The Turks had found her in a prince's palace which they had plundered. Monsieur de Feriol sent her to his sister-in-law, Madame de Feriol, in France, to be kept for him until she should ripen into a suitable concubine for an orientalized French gentleman in his old age.

The young girl grew up. She was charming, with an appearance of almost child-like innocence, lovely features, and the grace of a gazelle. Her look was ravishing and at the same time naïve. Nobody knows whether or not she, who was able to defend her maidenhood against the amorous onslaughts of the Regent, was able to resist when, ten years after her arrival, de Feriol came home to exercise his pasha rights. But this much is certain, that from the first day she met the Chevalier d'Aydie, her whole nature surrendered itself to a single passion. And, strange to say, her chosen lover was worthy of her, loved her so deeply and sincerely that Madame de Feriol asked her one day if she had bewitched him. "The only witchcraft I have used," she answered, "is to love him and to do everything I know to make his life as sweet as possible."

Aydie offered again and again to marry her, but she steadfastly refused. "His glory is too dear to me," she said. At last she regarded it as a duty to break off her liaison with him. She writes: "To cut into an ardent passion is a terrible thing; it is like amputating living flesh. Death would be pleasant in comparison. I doubt whether I shall survive this." Her health wasted, her beauty faded. But the Chevalier remained devoted.

He was a sharp contrast to the men at whom the great ladies of the period were throwing themselves —Saint-Lambert, de Guibert, etc., who were miniature editions of that hero of fashion, Richelieu, the idol of three generations of women. But Richelieu was at least a man worthwhile. He dazzled because his presence of mind, his courage, his brilliant talent as a general made him irresistible. The others were vain and shallow.

Moreover, Aïssé, unlike Emily du Châtelet, did not belong to the French nobility, whose ladies never experienced shame, indeed scarcely knew the meaning of the term. Writing of the exaggerated playing of an actress in a love-part, she makes a revealing comment:

"It seems to me that for one who wishes to play the part of a woman in love, modesty and restraint are important requisites, regardless of how exciting the situation may be. Any passion must be expressed in the inflection and emphasis of the voice. Violent gestures with the arms should be left to men and witches. A young princess should have greater reserve."

Aïssé pictures Aydie's actions during her last illness: "He fancies he can keep me alive by his lavish generosity. He makes presents to the entire household, and even to the cow, to whom he gives hay. He gives one woman money to enable her son to become an artisan; he gives another something to buy herself a fur collar and some laces; he gives to anyone who comes to him here; it is almost a mania. When I ask him what is the use of all this, he says that it will make them all feel they must take even more care of me."

Voltaire left a monument to the Chevalier d'Aydie in the character of Coussi in his *Adelaide de Guesclin.*

10

About this time Voltaire launched upon a course to which he held steadily. He exerted himself to save the life of a man unjustly accused. I have spoken of Richelieu's victory over the English at Minorca in 1756. At the outset of the war, Voltaire had prophesied the deeds of his old friend in numerous publications.

The sensation this victory caused was all the greater because the British, convinced of their eternal superiority at sea, had poked fun at the French. They described the French naval forces thus: "The ferry-boats from Corbeil and Auxerre, the ferry-boats from Asnières, and the row-boats from Saint Cloud." In London there was public betting that Richelieu would be a prisoner in the Tower inside of four months. The English had never dreamed this thing was possible: an English Admiral take to his heels before a French fleet? Absurd! And curses and accusations came down upon Admiral Byng like hail. A court-martial was ordered.

Voltaire, who had met Admiral Byng during his stay in England, was stung by the rank injustice of making one man pay for the injured vanity of the English nation. He felt this the more keenly because he had heard, from Richelieu, how valiantly Byng had fought. So he turned to his friend and asked him to write out a report of the battle that could be sent to Byng for use as evidence in his defense. Richelieu's generous answer was promptly forthcoming:

"I am deeply grieved to learn of the charges against Admiral Byng. I can give assurance that everything I have seen or heard of him does great credit to his honor. As he did all that could reasonably be expected of him, he should not be criticized for having suffered a defeat. Every time that two rival commanders fight for victory, no matter how even their forces, one must be defeated. And this is all that can be said against Byng. His conduct was that of a capable seaman throughout the engagement, and I am amazed that he should have been brought to trial.

The two fleets were evenly matched: the English had thirteen vessels and we had twelve, but ours were better equipped and easier to manœuvre. The fortune of war, which determines the outcome of all battles, naval battles particularly, was more in our favor than in that of the enemy, since our fire did more damage than theirs. I am perfectly convinced, and so is everyone else who was present, that had the English stayed and fought it out their whole fleet would have been annihilated. Nothing could be more unjust than the action that is being taken against Admiral Byng. Every man of honor, every officer on either side, must follow this trial with the closest attention."

Voltaire forwarded the Marshal's letter to Byng with the following note:

"Monsieur, although I am almost unknown to you, I consider it my duty to send you the copy of a letter which I have just received from the Marshal de Richelieu. Honor, Humanity, and Justice compel me to place it in your hands. This noble and unsolicited testimony from one of the most upright and great-hearted of my countrymen makes me confident that your judges will be no less fair in dealing with you."

Richelieu's letter won only four votes for the defendant. He was sentenced to death and shot on March 14, 1757. He met his end with a stout heart. Before his death he sent Voltaire the brief he had presented for his defense, and he had his executor send him the following lines: "The late Admiral Byng wished to assure you of his respect, his gratitude and his esteem; he fully appreciated what you did, and died consoled by the justice that was done him by a noble soldier."

When we consider how little Byng must have meant to Voltaire, and that the poet acted on his own initiative, we can feel how strongly his sense of justice was outraged even by a remote and foreign instance of brutality. He would take any amount of trouble to alleviate the lot of any victim of misfortune or bullying, which arose from patriotic or from religious prejudice.

11

Voltaire became the greatest attraction in Switzerland. His home on Lake Geneva became a shrine for distinguished travelers from all over Europe. Hence a multitude of anecdotes remain from the quarter of a century he lived there; some from people whom he never mentions in his writings or letters, some from Europe's most prominent men and women.

Among the ladies who called upon him here was Madame d'Epinay, who is known for her kindness to Jean Jacques Rousseau and for her close relations to Grimm. She had come to Geneva to consult Tronchin, the physician. She wished Rousseau to accompany her on this journey, but had to be content with her husband's company.

Voltaire showed her every courtesy and put his coach at her disposal. He called her the "true philosopher among women," and his notes always complimented her on her big black eyes.

Louise Tardieu d'Esclavelles (in her memoirs "Emily") was born in 1725. At the age of twenty she was married to Monsieur d'Epinay, the eldest son of a tax-farmer, who treated her disgracefully. Diderot characterized this man as "One who went through two millions, without saying one good word or accomplishing one good deed."

She was small, slender, very well formed, youthful without immaturity. She was honest, vivid and bright. She had beautiful shoulders and curly hair. She defined herself thus: "I have courage, resolution and an overwhelming shyness. I am truthful without being frank."

Voltaire says: "She has discovered the great secret of making the best of her own natural endowment. I wish I could learn it from her, but my wrinkles tell me I am too old for that. She is an eagle in a muslin cage."

First she fell in love with a certain Franceuil; but he soon revealed himself as cold and vicious. Duclos, secretary of the French Academy, tried to replace him with a mixture of tenderness and brutality, but she would not have him.

At the death of her sister-in-law, Madame de Jully, she was accused of having burned a number of compromising letters, and a paper which referred to a transaction between her husband and Jully. The German Baron Grimm undertook her defense. He was dependable and steady, a good observer of life, not quite a misanthrope, but certainly not the least bit inclined to overestimate people. Grimm was thirty-three years of age and she was two years younger when they met. Their relations lasted twenty-seven years, and during all this time his devotion never swerved.

Madame d'Epinay belonged to that circle of the encyclopedists in which it was not considered good form to let oneself be carried away by admiration. One should maintain the discerning critical viewpoint.

She knew besides that many women had gushed over Voltaire and that he had made fun of them when they left. She wanted him to feel that she was different. Reading her letters to Grimm, one sees that she finds nothing, or very little, to criticize in him. She jokes only about the fat, round niece, Madame Denis, who was already old and ugly and good-natured, and who entered into every discussion, without understanding anything about it. About Voltaire himself her tone is different:

"Again I spent a day with Voltaire. I was received with a politeness and attention which I believe I deserve, but to which I have not been accustomed. He asked me for news of you, of Diderot and of all of our friends. He made every effort to be pleasant. And he succeeded. It is not hard for him."

But as far as she could judge, she would rather spend her life with Diderot than with Voltaire. She did not consider that Diderot was appreciated at his full value in that house; whenever the encyclopedists were discussed, it was d'Alembert of whom one spoke.

Again she went to Les Délices to spend three or four days there with her physician Tronchin. And she writes to Grimm:

"One has no time to do anything while staying at Voltaire's house. I am forced, dear friend, to close my letter. I spent the day alone with him and his niece, and now he is worn out from all the stories he has told me. When I asked him to let me write four lines to you, so you would not be nervous about my health, which by the way is good, he expressed the wish to remain to see what my black eyes say while I am writing. He is sitting opposite me now. He is poking at the coals in the fireplace, and laughing; he says that I am making a fool of him. I have answered that I am writing down everything he says, for that is at least as good as what I am thinking. I shall go back to town tonight, and shall then answer all of your letters. Here it is impossible to write anything."

12

Still more famous than Madame d'Epinay was another visitor, the great English historian Gibbon, then in the prime of his youth. As a boy of fifteen Gibbon had been converted to the Catholic religion, therefore his father sent him to Lausanne to come under Calvinistic influence. There he spent five years (1753-1758). In his *Memoirs* he wrote:

"Before I was called back from Switzerland I had the satisfaction of seeing the most extraordinary man of the time, a poet, historian, and philosopher, who had filled thirty quarto volumes with his productions in prose and verse, which were often excellent, and always entertaining. Is it necessary that I add the name Voltaire? . . . The greatest privilege I enjoyed from Voltaire's stay in Lausanne was the rare one of hearing a great poet recite his own works on the stage. He had gathered a company of ladies and gentlemen, some of whom were by no means without talent. A nice little theater was set up in Mon Repos, a square at the edge of a suburb, and costumes and scenery had been prepared at the expense of the actors. The rehearsals were directed by the author with the fond care of a father. For two successive winters his tragedies *Zaïre, Alzire, Zulime,* and his sentimental comedy *L'Enfant prodigue* were played at the theater in Mon Repos. Voltaire himself played the rôles that were in keeping with his age, Lusignan, Alvarès, Benassar, Euphemon. His performance was in the style of the old theater, with pompous diction; it breathed enthusiasm for the poetry, but was somewhat lacking in naturalness."

13

There is one celebrity among the visitors, whom Voltaire never mentions, but who has written a most detailed account of his discussions with his hospitable host. This is Jacques Casanova de Seingalt, who devotes the ninth chapter of the fourth volume of his *Memoirs* to his conversations with Voltaire. Although some doubt must be cast upon the full dependability of Casanova's account, these reports seem to have been put down, as some say they were, immediately after they took place. Else some of the details mentioned would have been forgotten.

It is natural that the talk is mainly on Italian personalities and on Italian literature; but one clearly feels Casanova's aim is to show his superiority in every field that is treated. He often says provoking things to Voltaire which he was really scarcely impudent enough to say.

It is actually comic to see Casanova assigning himself the rôle of defender of religion against Voltaire. When Voltaire mentions his fight against superstition, Casanova says:

"You can, in my opinion, spare yourself the trouble of fighting a thing that you are powerless to destroy."

"What I cannot carry through, others will, and I shall still have the honor of having started it."

"That is very nice. But even supposing you did succeed in eradicating superstition, with what do you wish to replace it?"

"If I free the human race from a wild beast that is devouring it, need anyone ask what I put in its place?"

"It is not devouring it. On the contrary, it is essential to its existence."

Voltaire points out that he wants to see the nations happy and free. But they cannot be free as long as superstition prevails. Casanova asks if he believes in the sovereignty of the people. No, a ruler is required to lead them. But he should not be a despot, he should guide a free nation. Thereupon Casanova replies that he agrees with Hobbes; the people must be enslaved, tamed, kept in chains. Let them keep the beast which they like so well. Casanova says that Voltaire reminds him of Don Quixote, who freed the galley slaves who as a reward attacked him, etc.

Now whether this remark, as seems likely, was inserted after the outbreak of the French Revolution, or not, the intention is perfectly clear: to picture Voltaire as the naïve liberal, who believes that the common sense of the people can be awakened and developed, while Casanova appears as the discerning student and despiser of *hoi-polloi,* who realizes that a Revolution will be the consequence of the freethinking of the masses, and who believes in religion, between two orgies such as only his pen is fit to describe.

But to refute this idea, that Voltaire had not the slightest suspicion of the Revolution which was to take place only ten years after his death, here is a passage from a typical letter, which he wrote (on April 2, 1764) to the French Ambassador at Turin, his friend, the Marquis de Chauvelin, who with his wife had visited Casanova at his house:

"Everywhere I see the seeds of an inevitable revolution, which, however, I shall not live to enjoy. The French come late to everything; but finally they do come. Enlightenment has become so widespread that at the first opportunity everything is ready to explode. That will make a loud report. The young are fortunate; they shall see great things come to pass."

All that can truly be said is that Voltaire did not foresee the Reign of Terror.

In the course of the conversation the honorable

Casanova says characteristically that Chapelain's *La Pucelle,* which Voltaire took the liberty of calling a bad poem, at least does not make, like a certain other *Pucelle,* so wild a bid for popular applause as to offend all sense of shame and piety. And then, after giving his host the pleasant information that the Swiss writer Haller, whom Voltaire had criticized respectfully, does not return his French colleague's esteem, Casanova closes the conversation and takes his departure.

A little later Casanova becomes still more bitter, because Voltaire criticized his Italian translation of *L'Ecossaise* as very poorly done.

He concludes his account thus:

"I went my way, content in my foolish assumption that I had squeezed this athlete against the wall. Unfortunately there remained in my system a residue of ill-humor, which forced me for full ten years to deprecate everything that flowed from his immortal pen. Now I feel remorse for it, even though on going through my critical notes I find that I was often right. I should have kept silent, respected him and doubted the correctness of my own judgment. I should have considered that had it not been for his teasing, for which I hated him on the third day, I should have found him sublime in every respect. . . . Posterity will read what I have written and will count me among the number of his detractors, perhaps disregarding the apology I am giving to this great man. When we meet after death in the realm of Pluto . . . he will be my friend, I his honest admirer."

14

The Elector of the Palatinate had promised to pay Voltaire and his niece a considerable annuity during their lives. The Elector kept his promise. He and the other neighboring German princes were most obliging and hospitable to Voltaire. On his way to see the Elector, Voltaire stopped for some time with the Margrave of Baden-Durlach, in Karlsruhe. This visit is of interest to us because, according to a tradition, Voltaire began here to write *Candide,* and read the chapters to the Elector as he finished them.

For a long time Voltaire had signed his letters jokingly: "Voltaire, the Swiss." Every year that passed had made him more and more a Swiss and more and more a farmer.

He bought a house in Lausanne with fifteen windows in the front. From his bed he could overlook Lake Geneva and all of Savoy that is not hidden by the Alps. Below his garden lay hundreds of other gardens. On this border of Savoy, across the Lake with its beautiful reflections of the gardens, the Alps rise in the form of an amphitheater. With this natural grandeur before his eyes he did not miss Potsdam. And his country place, Les Délices, he liked in summer as much as the house in Lausanne in winter.

But soon he acquired greater holdings, not because of any greed for land, but in the interest of his safety.

As soon as he had resolved to settle near the Lake for the rest of his days, he had to draw his conclusions from the experiences he had already been through. For it did not take him long to discover that there was a clergy in Geneva as well as elsewhere, and that it was no easier to keep on good terms with Protestant pastors than with Catholic priests. Here as in France he had to cope with all sorts of persecution from the authorities. He burrowed himself in like a fox—with many dens, and many exits from every den.

He was a Swiss through and through; but he purchased the estate of Ferney on the other side of the border, and at the first clash with the gentlemen in Geneva he could be in France, where he was a Frenchman, through and through, and they could do him no harm. However, should the French Ministry get one of those frequent, unpleasant fits of curiosity to learn who the author of this or that pamphlet might be, he could promptly be back on Swiss territory at Les Délices. And as nothing is so convenient and nothing is so respected as power, it was the natural thing to make many Swiss his vassals.

By purchasing President de Brosses's estate of Tournay, situated between the French border and

Geneva, he got the property with all seignorial rights and privileges attached. Tournay was a county, and there are some letters in existence signed by Voltaire as Comte de Tournay, this to the greatest amusement of Frederick, who so addresses him in various letters. Voltaire stated very clearly in one of his letters to Tronchin how great a pleasure it was to make men his vassals, who had begun to disturb his peace.

There were not many seignorial rights directly connected with Ferney, but by the kindness of the French Ministry he acquired privileges for Ferney, which corresponded to the rights which he acquired by the purchase of Tournay. Tournay was neglected, but extensive, and Voltaire wanted to cultivate it. His two properties reached almost to Les Délices, so that he had assembled "a little kingdom within a republic."

He writes gaily (on December 24, 1758) to Thiriot: "You are mistaken, old friend, if you think that I have here only two legs. I am a quadruped. I have one leg in Lausanne, in a very nice winter house, and one leg in Les Délices near Geneva, where the best people come to visit me. These two are the forelegs. The hindlegs stand in Ferney and in Tournay, which I have purchased from President de Brosses."

The contract for the purchase of Ferney had not even been signed, when he was defending his future vassals against a priest who had stated that he "would persecute them to the utmost," and he was seeing to the repair of the roads. Everything, great and little, became the object of his care. His stables in Les Délices lacked a stallion, and he wrote to the Marquis de Voyer, Keeper of the Royal Stables, to get an excellent stallion for his stud. He also obtained all sorts of favors by getting Madame de Pompadour to drop a word to the Prime Minister, the Duke of Choiseul.

In his letters during his eternal wars Frederick calls himself "the Don Quixote of the North," while Voltaire calls himself "the Old Man of the Mountain," like the leader of the Assassins, but "with better conscience, as he had not murdered anybody."

He discovered that of all the different forms of happiness, independence is the most worth striving for.

VI

POETRY AND SATIRE

1

DURING the reaction of Romanticism against Classicism and during the transformation of the language, which took place through the efforts of Victor Hugo and Theophile Gautier, Voltaire as a poet was forgotten. He lost standing in his country, as he had been shamefully overlooked in Germany because of the attacks of Lessing and the disparagement of the German Romanticists. But from the very first there was one among the French Romanticists, the only great critical talent, Sainte-Beuve, who gave Voltaire his due as a lyric poet.

After showing that the odes of Jean Baptist Rousseau, though perfect, were cold and that he had exerted no influence, Sainte-Beuve said: "The contrary is the case with Voltaire, the only true, the only great lyric poet of the eighteenth century. His imagination is always awake. One can find the poet in every fragment that came from his pen: trifles, satires, introductions to poetic works, impromptu lines which circle the globe. In his conversation he is a poet, by the brilliant flashes of his wit, the continuous lightning of his words, the lively and charming twist he gives each of his remarks."

In any period there are only a few who are able to raise themselves above their contemporaries' narrow conceptions of poetry, and who appreciate the fact that people's ideas of poetry change. These will rely upon their own judgment, and without any consideration of fashion will approve that which they feel to be good. The critic who amounts to more than a weather vane of literary fashion will esteem Voltaire as a lyric poet.

2

His prose is today far better appreciated than his poetry; that is why I have quoted so many of his verses.

His prose is read and appreciated in his short novels only. Unfortunately considerable knowledge of history is essential to the understanding of these productions one and a half centuries old.

For a proper appreciation of this prose, one should read one or two of the *Facéties*. Here his art is still better, his mental superiority still more striking, even for one who comes to them without any preliminary study.

We have seen how long Voltaire, who had been educated by the Jesuits, tried to show his gratitude. In 1748 he wrote to Père Vionnet: "I have fought for a long time under the banner of your society. You scarcely have a more insignificant soldier, but not one more devoted"—strong words. In spite of his fundamental difference of outlook he showed the Jesuits an almost childish respect, and had they responded with equal consideration everything would have gone smoothly. But there were belligerent Jesuits. Their chief publication attacked him again and again, until the editor, Father Berthier, incited Voltaire to a reply which in spite of its sting has charming gaiety and irresistible wit.

The title is: *Report of the Jesuit Berthier's Illness, Confession, Death and Revelation Including the Report on the Journey of Brother Garassie, and everything that Followed and Will Follow.*

This joke was perpetrated in November, 1759, and the man whose death is described so vividly lived twenty-three years longer. Father Berthier had just returned to Bourges and had been granted a pension. His journal was a Church paper and its purpose was to attack freethinking and freethinkers, Voltaire in particular.

The story runs thus:

"On October 12, 1759, Brother Berthier set out on this unhappy journey from Paris to Versailles, with

Brother Coutu who usually accompanied him. Berthier had put several numbers of *Le Journal de Trevoux* in the coach, which he wished to give to his protectors and protectresses, the chambermaid of Madame Nourrice, a royal cook, one of the pharmacy boys of the King, and several other gentlemen in high positions, who could appreciate real talent. Several times on the way Berthier felt ill; his head grew heavy; he had to yawn.—'I don't know what is wrong with me,' he said to Coutu; 'In all my life I never yawned so much.'—'Reverend Father,' said Coutu, 'that will pass away.'—'What? What do you mean by your "pass away"?'—'I mean,' said Brother Coutu, 'that I too am yawning, and I don't know why, for, I have read nothing all day nor have you spoken to me since we set out.'—While Brother Coutu spoke these words he yawned more than before. Berthier answered that this yawning apparently would never end.—The coachman turned around, and when he saw the two clerical gentlemen yawning, he yawned with them. The malady affected the people passing by. Everybody in the houses nearby was yawning. Such a great influence has a scholar sometimes by mere proximity."

After several chills both travelers fall asleep, in a deep, deathlike sleep from which they have not yet waked when the coach stops at the gate of Versailles. The coachman tries to wake them and get them out of the coach, but in vain. He calls for aid. Coutu, who is more robust, shows some signs of life, but Berthier remains cold. Several royal physicians coming from lunch, either pass by without looking at the patients or else give absurd explanations of their condition. Finally, a famous physician, who had studied under Boerhave, opens the patient's mouth, notices his bad breath, and decides that he is poisoned, and this with one of the most virulent poisons. The coachman is asked if by chance he has a package of drugs for the pharmacist in Versailles.—"No," he answers, "the only package I have for the Reverend Father is this."—He looks in the basket of the coach and brings out two dozen numbers of *Le Journal de Trevoux*.—"There you are, gentlemen, was I wrong?" asks the great physician, and all those present admire his astonishing penetration.

Now everybody understands the cause of the illness. On the spot, the dangerous package is burned, and this brings Berthier around a little; but his head is affected and the danger is not yet over. The physician gets an inspiration to make him drink a page of the *Encyclopedia* dissolved in white wine, whereupon a great amount of gall is got rid of. But as his condition grows worse, it is necessary to call a father confessor. The first priest who is approached for this purpose refuses to take the responsibility for a Jesuit soul, the second agrees with the first. The dying man is asked if he has loved God and his neighbor.—"I love God," he answers, "and my neighbor as far as I can."

"Have you not read bad books?" asks the father-confessor. "I don't mean just boring books, like so and so," here follow the names of a dozen books by authors whom Voltaire wants to hit, "but I mean so and so," a number of theological writings are enumerated, among which are books of the old Jesuit Sanchez whom Pascal had attacked some time previously.

Berthier states that his position allows him to read everything; he is the editor of *Le Journal de Trevoux.* "What, you publish this paper which judges and rends all good writers? Don't you know that whoso calls his brother a fool is in danger of Hell fire? Yet you tempt honest people who happen to read your writings to call you a fool! You who so complacently criticize everything you do not understand. Two vices have you in their grip, haughtiness and greed. I cannot absolve you from your sins unless you swear not to work any more for *Le Journal de Trevoux.*"

When Berthier refuses, the priest declines to absolve him from his sins. Just then Brother Coutu comes running and calls, perspiring and stinking: "For God's sake, don't take the Sacrament from his hand! Do you know who he is? The editor of *Les Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* (the rival Church paper). You are lost if you confess to him."

Astonishment, shame and anger bring back life to the dying man for a moment. "Scoundrel," he exclaims, "opponent of God, ot Kings, of the Jesuits! So you fancy you are less of a fanatic than I! Granted that I have written against enlightened men who have not lowered themselves to answer and to destroy me! Haven't you been just as arrogant? Don't we have to admit that in this century, the sewer of all centuries, we are the two most miserable of all insects that buzz around the dung-heap?"

The power of truth forced Father Berthier to speak thus in his hour of death. He spoke as one inspired. But soon the moment of death came; he pressed the hand of Brother Coutu, who said, "O Reverend Father, you are a saint, you are the first writer in the world to confess that he was boring. May you die in peace!"

The next chapter, *Brother Berthier's Ghost Reveals Itself to Brother Garassise,* begins thus:

"When I, Brother Ignaz Garassise, woke October 14th, at two o'clock in the morning, a ghost was there. It was Brother Berthier. I was seized by the longest and most terrible fit of yawning I ever knew. —'You are dead, Reverend Father?' I said.—Yawning, he made a sign to me which meant; yes!—'All the better,' I said, 'for, doubtless Your Reverence is accepted among the Saints. You must have one of the first places. Speak, Reverend Father, yawn no more but tell me.' "

The deceased now informs him that he is mistaken; Paradise is closed to him. And Garassise must refrain from slander in his future contributions to the *Journal de Trevoux,* for that is not forgiven in Heaven. Above all he must take care not to be boring, as Berthier was, for tedium is regarded as the unpardonable sin. Berthier, it seems did not go to Hell but to Purgatory. There he is to remain for 333 333 years, three months, three weeks, three days; and he is not to be discharged until a Brother is found who is devoted, peaceful, and unworldly, and who slanders nobody to reigning princes.

The last chapter treats of Brother Garassise's arrival in Paris from Lisbon in the year 1760; he gets into the convention of the Brothers who have gathered in order to determine who is to take over the *Journal de Trevoux* after Berthier. Among others Fréron gives himself the highest recommendation: "My Reverend Fathers," he says, "I have been a Jesuit; you expelled me; but I belong to you; for, as Horace says: The barrel retains for a long time the smell of that which was in it. I am fit for the task. I am more ignorant, more impudent, and more of a liar than any other. Give me a lease of the *Journal de Trevoux* and I shall pay you as I can."

There is, however, no inclination to take the bread away from the children of the house and give it to the dogs, as the Bible says, and Brother Garassise claims his rights:

"I was chosen by Berthier himself, who, yawning, consecrated me as a journalist. I worked with the *Journal de Trevoux* until at your order I had to embark for Paraguay. I possess the pen of Berthier, the tedium of Catrou, the cantankerousness of Porée and the dryness of Daniel. I therefore ask for the prize that is due my merits."

And the Journal was given to him unanimously.

3

A striking passage in *Micromégas* pictures the inhabitants of Sirius and Saturn observing a battle on the Earth. The way in which the inhabitant of Sirius criticizes war, the anger and pity of the Giant over its stupidity, make a deep impression:

"Can one understand such madness? I feel like taking three steps and crushing this ridiculous, murderous heap of ants under my feet." "It's not worth the trouble," answers the inhabitant of Saturn; "they are working hard enough at their own destruction. Ten years from now not one per cent of these poor wretches will be left. If they do not slay each other, then hunger, or debauchery will finish all of them. Besides, these are not the ones who should be punished, but those barbarians who sit calmly in their warm rooms, comfortably digesting, and order a million people to wholesale murder, and then go ceremoniously to thank God in the churches."

Voltaire's hatred of war never abated, not even in his obligatory odes in honor of war heroes. He told Frederick the Great just what he thought of the conquest of Silesia: "I wish you would be so kind as to tell me the truth: Are you any happier now than when you were in Rheinsberg?" (March 25, 1741). And in almost the same words (April, 1742): "I do not know if you are now, in all this noise of fame, any happier than you were in Rheinsberg in quiet seclusion." He speaks very freely in his letter of May 26, 1742, in which he says: "I think of the human race, Sire, before I think of you; I shed tears, like Abbé Saint-Pierre, for the human race, whose terror you are becoming, and only thereafter can I rejoice in your glory." In the same letter he expresses the same thought in verse:

J'aime peu les héros; ils font trop de fracas;
Je hais ces conquérants, fiers ennemis d'eux-mêmes
    Qui dans les horreurs des combats
    Ont placé le bonheur suprême,
Cherchant partout la mort et la fesant souffrir
    A cent mille hommes, leurs semblables.
Plus leur gloire a d'éclat, plus ils sont haïssables.
    O ciel, que je dois vous haïr!
Je vous aime pourtant malgré tout ce carnage.

Seventeen years later in a letter to Frederick he says: "Believe me, Sire, I was made for you, and I am ashamed of being happier than you; for I live with philosophers, while you have only first class murderers in uniform around you. Move to Sans-Souci, Sire, to Sans-Souci!"

Let us add Voltaire's biting description of the storming of a besieged city, and its capture. He describes the courage, but also the horrors of battle.

Je n'ai cessé de voir ces voleurs de nuit
Qui, dans un chemin creux, sans tambour et sans bruit,
Discrètement armés de sabres et d'échelles,
Assassinent d'abord cinq ou six centinelles;
Puis, montant lestement aux murs de la cité,
Où les pauvres bourgeois dormaient en sûreté,
Portent dans leur logis le fer avec les flammes,
Poignardent les maris, déshonorent les femmes,
Ecrasent les enfants, et, las de tant d'efforts

Boivent le vin d'autrui sur des monceaux de morts.
Le lendemain matin on les mène â l'église
Rendre grâce au bon Dieu de leur noble entreprise;
Lui chanter en latin qu'il est leur digne appui;
Que dans la ville en feu l'on n'eût rien fait sans lui;
Qu'on ne peut ni voler, ni massacrer son monde,
Ni brûler les cités, si Dieu ne nous seconde.

4

In *Candide* Voltaire treats a broad question: Is our world really, as Leibnitz believes and Pope stated, the best of all possible worlds?

The distaste for metaphysical debate which Voltaire expresses in *Candide* is his reply to Pope's "everything is well" and Leibnitz' "everything is for the best." He answers, not with suppositions, but with facts: Slavery and syphilis, thirty thousand dead in the Lisbon earthquake, ten times as many dead and countless injured in the Seven Years War, the smoke and flames of the stake.

Candide meets a negro who has been horribly disfigured by a barbarous master and he says: "O Pangloss, you did not foresee this horror. It's all I need to see. I must renounce your optimism."—"What is optimism," asks Cacambo.—O, said Candide, "that is the insanity which insists that all is well when everything is going wrong."

Had one, after the earthquake of Lisbon, called to the unfortunate survivors that lay mangled beneath the ruins: "Everything is all right, the necessary effect of inevitable causes; your misfortune means nothing, it is all for the greatest good of the greatest number."—it would have sounded like a cruel attempt to be witty. Everything is all right? For whom? Obviously not for us. For some God? It is clear that this God does not suffer from our misfortune. What consolation do these phrases bring? What use is it to tell the slandered, to tell the persecuted, to tell those who stand bound to the stake waiting for the flames to reach them, that everything is well, that nothing better can be expected from a fate that embraces the whole universe in its love?

Voltaire was naturally inclined to enjoy life. Everything gave him pleasure from a good meal, a good bed, a merry conversation, up to the sight of a lovely woman or the effect of a fine poem. He enjoyed being a poet, historian, physicist, architect, upholsterer, gardener, wine-grower, combatter of errors, fighter against folly and superstition. Comparing his epoch with the past, he felt with satisfaction that progress had been made.

But about the middle of the century his joy in life decreased. Too many horrible events occurred in the world at large and in his own private life. Lisbon's catastrophe gave the signal for every sort of public calamity. The fires of religious persecution again flamed up. The Seven Years War drowned in blood all hope of peaceful progress.

Fresh news nearly always means fresh misfortunes. After one has lived for some time, all illusions are gone. Fate hurls us along, toying with us. Let us try, let us try . . . what a word! Nothing depends upon us, we cannot decide anything, we are puppets, ruled forces.

5

From this mood came *Candide,* and as the book had been so thoroughly prepared, its elaboration required but a few weeks. Toward the end he became so keen to finish that he locked himself in for three days and refused to open the door, except to have his meals and his coffee brought.

On the fourth day his worried niece forced him to let her enter. He tossed her the completed manuscript and said: "Here, curious Madame, is something you may read."

Even though *Candide* mocks at optimism on every page, is it fair to say that it preaches pessimism? Not at all. One system is as much detested by Voltaire as the other. He knows there are good people and beneficent people, and he does not try to hide it. With his restless inclination to work, his insuperable belief in human progress, he is by no means inclined to see everything black. He himself is well off; but he gets no pleasure, as Lucretius expressed it, from watching the fierce storm from a safe harbor. His *joie de vivre* is depressed by sympathy and fellow-feeling for the suffering of others.

Read carefully the end of the story: outside of Constantinople Candide and his companions meet a good old man who is enjoying the fresh air in front of his door under an arbor of orange trees. They ask him the name of a Mufti who had recently been murdered in the city. He knows nothing about the case, but invites the travelers into his house and prepares a choice meal for them. His hospitality is lordly. He possesses a few acres of land which he cultivates with the help of his children. The work keeps them free of three great evils: ennui, sin, and poverty.

This makes a deep impression on Candide. Pangloss says that man is not made for rest, and Martin admits that there is one way to make life bearable: to work without brooding too much. The entire little company is converted to this view. And everyone turns out to be good for something. Even Brother Giroflée becomes a good worker, still more, a good fellow. And when Pangloss wishes to resume his long discourse about how man was perfect before the fall, and that all events are for the best in the best of all possible worlds, Candide interrupts him with the words: "Well said, but we must attend to our garden."

This which cannot be called an expression of cynicism, or of despair, or of pessimism, or of surrender, is Voltaire's own final motto. It is the consolation he holds out to the human race.

Feeling independent and safe through his ownership of several estates, Voltaire did not hesitate, this time, to publish his work. His friends recognized his style, but as usual he promptly disclaimed authorship of the book whose title page read: *Translated from the German by Dr. Ralph.* He wrote to his acquaintance, the Genevese pastor Jacob Vernes: "I have finally got around to reading *Candide,* and, as with *Jeanne d'Arc,* I tell you that anyone must be out of his senses to ascribe such stuff to me." Even to his own publishers, the Brothers Cramer, he wrote carefully: "What sort of work is this *Candide,* of which it is said that it is scandal to sell it, and which is supposed to have originated in Lyons? I might like to have it. Couldn't you, gentlemen, get me a bound copy? It is said that some people are brazen enough to claim that I am the author of this work, which I have never laid eyes on."

In spite of this little farce, agreed upon in advance with the publishers, they succeeded in smuggling a considerable number of copies into Geneva.

In March, 1759, *Candide* was denounced to the Council, who ordered that it should be burned by the hangman at once. This was done, to Voltaire's anger. He took revenge shortly by flooding Geneva with brief anti-Church and anti-Christian pamphlets. The authorities of Paris as well as of Geneva were furious. The encyclopedists had almost got the best of them. The clergy urged that some decisive action should be taken. Helvetius's book *De l'Esprit*, which had caused a considerable sensation, was condemned by the Parliament and burned by the hangman on February 10, 1759.

VII

FERNEY

1

Several times in his letters Voltaire mentions a significant circumstance: he was continually being visited by men who bore names that were familiar and dear to him; but they were not the ones whose pictures he had associated with these names. These were the children of the men he had known, and sometimes they were as old as he remembered their fathers to have been. His earlier environment receded with the passing of time.

Voltaire had been in his earlier years a dear friend of the Marshal de Villars and his wife. One day there came the Marshal's son, the Duke de Villars, Governor of Provence, who led a life of princely splendor at Aix. In 1760, when he visited Voltaire he was fifty-eight years old, conducted himself in every respect like a grand seigneur, but was used up by vice and dissipation. He cherished a passion for the theater. In his youth he had played in the comedies given in his parents' home. He was of the opinion that very few knew how to recite verses as well as himself. Without hesitation he undertook at Voltaire's house to play the rôle of Genghis Khan in *l'Orphelin de la Chine,* opposite Madame de Denis. The performances took place behind closed doors, as he feared to injure his dignity as governor of a province.

After him came the young and winning Chevalier de Boufflers, the twenty-six-year-old son of the pleasant Marquise, who had been the center of the Court of the Polish King in Luneville. He was a prankish young blade, with many little talents. He wrote neat verses in which he now assured his pretty mother that she stood above other women as a Seraph above angels, then teased this admired mother on her inflammability, then again all ladies about that strange, incomprehensible thing which they called the heart, but which he, hearing of its longing and needs, satisfactions and joys, was inclined to call by a different name. In Switzerland, to be able to study the country, he passed himself off as a poor French painter who lived by his art.

Since his youth the Chevalier had looked forward to meeting Voltaire. So he introduced himself at Ferney and was received as his mother's son, and made to feel at home in the home of an old friend of the Marquise de Boufflers. He stayed for several months. He was delighted with the place and its proprietor, enjoyed the society of the pretty, witty, young Madame Cramer who was about his own age and the wife of Voltaire's printer and publisher. He writes:

"You have no idea of the lavish way in which Voltaire spends and gives away his money. He is King and Lord of the land he lives on; he brings happiness to his neighborhood, and is as good a patriarch as he is a poet. If he were to be divided and I were to see on one side the man whom I read, and on the other the one whom I know in daily life, I would not know which to choose. His publishers may do whatever they wish, he is and remains himself, the best edition of his books. The house is delightful, the location excellent, the food choice, and my rooms magnificent."

No visit could have given Voltaire a more overwhelming idea of the passing of years and the shifting of contemporary figures than that of young Count de Lauraguais, a somewhat eccentric, but brilliant poet, who called at Ferney in September, 1761, to dedicate his tragedy *Clytemnestre* to Voltaire. He introduced himself as the grandchild of the merry Duchess de Lauraguais, upon whom not so very long ago Louis XV had bestowed his favor.

The Count de Lauraguais wrote poetry, good poetry. He was the lover of the opera star Sophie Arnould. It was he who was responsible for freeing the French theater from the practice of allowing spectators to crowd the stage and hinder the free movement of the actor. With 30,000 livres he compensated the actors for the loss of revenue.

Lauraguais had other good qualities; for instance, he supported poor but deserving writers. Voltaire makes frequent reference to the pension he gave to the famous encyclopedist, de Marsais, who was persecuted by the Bishop of Soissons.

Lauraguais described his arrival at the patriarch's house thus:

"He scarcely had embraced me with those arms, that in my childhood had often opened to me, and mentioned the correspondence with which he has honored me ever since we met in Berlin, then he led me through his château, gave me holy water at the entrance to his church and said: 'Now let's go down to the garden.' Noticing my astonishment at finding there a jackass enjoying itself on the green, he said: 'Don't you recognize Fréron?'—'Yes,' I answered, 'one might take exception to some points about the figure, but the likeness in the face is striking. I am surprised to find him with you; I did not think that you were on good terms with him.'—'His body,' was the reply, 'flourishes best in Paris but his face does better here.' As you see me here I am not quite the Voltaire whom my readers know. I often feel the need of a good fit of anger, and this face gives me just what I need."

2

The visit of his old friend, Richelieu, to Ferney could not fail to remind him of the flight of time. As soon as Richelieu's arrival was announced, Voltaire, in festive attire and accompanied by his household, went out to meet him. He, who had been expelled from Prussia, exiled from Paris, who had wandered about homeless, was glad to welcome the victor of Port Mahon, to be able to offer him princely hospitality as Lord of a little territory.

During the Marshal's stay the Duchess d'Enville, her son, the Count d'Harcourt, and the Duke de Villars, did not leave Ferney; nor did Cramer or other agreeable members of good Genevese society. Madame Ménage and Madame Cramer were both attractive ladies. The Marshal remained with Voltaire five days. The entire castle of Tournay had been turned over to him, and every evening he was escorted there by a great procession. Voltaire did everything his wit could devise to give a festive air to the Marshal's visit. And the latter had retained his youthful ability at making himself liked by the fair sex. One day Voltaire came upon him on his knees before Madame Ménage. Then suddenly he was seized with a passion for Madame Cramer. A complicated intrigue was set in motion to enable Richelieu to be alone with this Parisienne who had been driven out of Calvinistic Geneva. Her husband was sent into town to have a poetic epistle which Voltaire had written in honor of the Marshal, printed overnight, so it could be presented in the morning.

Richelieu had, however, not even bothered to get Madame Cramer's consent; so confident was he of his irresistible appeal, in spite of his sixty-six years. But when Philibert Cramer had gone to Geneva to remain overnight and Richelieu made advances to his pretty wife, she laughed in his face. His only consolation was to see the husband enter his bedroom in the morning with the freshly printed poem in his hand.

This defeat of Richelieu's, perhaps the first he ever suffered, could not but serve to remind Voltaire that the years had passed over both of them and left their mark even upon the ideal of ladies.

Our knowledge of this rebuff of the wanton seducer is Richelieu's own fault. He found the story so amusing that he told it in Paris to all of his friends.

3

A guest whom Voltaire saw for the first time and who had a great reputation was Prince Charles Joseph de Ligne, later a Field Marshal of Austria, "the favorite of all kings, courtier at all Courts, friend of all philosophers," as he was called by his contemporaries. He was then twenty-eight; but already his witty sallies and brilliant repartee were quoted everywhere. He was a charming conversationalist, Ségur narrates several anecdotes of conceits he devised and clever retorts he gave while accompanying Catharine II on her journey from Kief to Kersan. On board of the ship the Empress said referring to the uneasiness of the powers at this journey: "The Cabinet of St. Petersburg which is now on the Dniester 'must loom very large indeed' if the other cabinets are so concerned about it."—"Even so, Madame," answered Prince de Ligne, "I know of no other that is smaller. Its extent is only a few inches; it reaches from one of your temples to the other, and from the base of your nose to the roots of your hair."

He has left us a vivid description of Voltaire. First a minute picture of his style of dress: on week days, gray shoes, iron-gray stockings, a wide jacket of silk, a great wig and a little black velvet cap; on Sundays a neat reddish-brown coat, without ruffles, vest and trousers to match, or a jacket with wide tails, gold-trimmed with wavy braid and wide lace-cuffs which reached to the finger tips. Then a description of his person:

"He was now writer, now Courtier of Louis XIV's Court, then again gentleman of the best society. . . . The best thing I could do during my stay was, not to try to be entertaining or witty myself, but to induce him to talk. I was eight days at his house, and I wish I could recall the sublime, honest, beautiful things that escaped him one after another. But this is impossible. I laughed or I admired; but I was as though in a continual ecstasy. Everything about him, even his injustice, his mistakes, his hobbies, his lack of appreciation of the fine arts, his moods, his pretentions to being what he could not be, as well as what he really was—everything he did was delightful, new, charming and unexpected. He would like to be considered an excellent statesman and a great pedant, this last to such a degree that he would like to be boring. . . . He had a very high opinion of the English constitution. I recall saying to him: 'Monsieur de Voltaire, don't forget the power that maintains it: the ocean; without this the constitution would not stand.' "

In one of the letters young Boufflers sends his mother are the following lines on Voltaire: “You cannot imagine how pleasant he is in his home; he would be the best old man in the world were he not the greatest man alive; he has only the one fault of being inaccessible.”

This was no fault, but with the years it became a more and more pressing necessity. Many visitors had to be content with a polite reception by his niece and depart without having seen the lord of the house. His health was really not good; but he used this as a pretext when he didn’t want to see anybody. “My God, save me from my friends; I’ll attend to my enemies myself,” was one of his favorite outbursts. Sometimes he found it necessary to speak sharply to visitors who abused the hospitality extended them and who made themselves at home without ever mentioning their departure. To one such guest (Abbé Coyer) Voltaire said one day: “You, Monsieur l’Abbé, are a true counterpart to Don Quixote; he mistook inns for manors; you seem to mistake manors for inns.”

It was most difficult to get rid of the English tourists who wanted to see him. Several who called on him one day were told that Voltaire was sick. But they wanted to see him even if sick. “Tell them that I am dead,” said Voltaire.—They wanted to see the body.—Furiously he exclaimed: “Then tell them that the devil has taken me.”

An Englishman emphasized that he had made the long journey in order to see Voltaire and that he would not depart without having seen him.—“Aha,” said Voltaire, “he thinks I am a beast on exhibit. Tell him the show costs six pounds.”—“Here are twelve pounds,” said the Englishman, unruffled, “but I’ll be back tomorrow.”

4

Each passing day, Ferney became more and more a meeting place for the prominent men and women of Europe. Every day, Voltaire worked to spread content around him. He had the Bishop of Annecy's permission to tear down the hideous old church at the entrance to the château of Ferney and to erect a new one at his own expense. He himself took charge of the work, the tearing down as well as the building.

He had a large wooden cross removed from the entrance to the cemetery, without asking the required permission. He is said to have told the laborers: "Oh, take that gallows away!"

The clergyman at Moens, who hated Voltaire, requested the one at Ferney to remove the sacrament to the church at Moens. He said that Voltaire had desecrated the Ferney church. The priest of Ferney obeyed and in a great procession, accompanied by the weeping members of the community he carried the sacrament to Moens.

Voltaire with his usual keenness approached the Pope himself, first through Cardinal Passionei, who died before an answer came, and then through the Duke de Choiseul, the French Foreign Minister. Voltaire sent the plan of his church to Rome and asked for relics. Benedict, was very courteous and sent the hair shirt of St. Francis of Assisi, "Voltaire's patron." The infidel François did not feel tempted to put it on, but was glad to have it to adorn his church.

As is well known he had the words *"Deo erexit Voltaire"* carved on the outer wall of the church. To the Englishman Richard Twiss who visited him he said: "This church which I have had erected is the only one that is consecrated to God alone; all the others are consecrated to male or female saints. I would rather build a church to the Lord than to His servants," and in a letter of October 26, 1761, he wrote: "I have built a church and a theater; I have already celebrated my Mysteries at the theater but as yet I have not heard a mass in my church. On one and the same day I received relics from the Pope, and a portrait from Madame de Pompadour."

VIII

THE WRITING OF HISTORY

1

The writers who, before Voltaire, wrote the history of France, were inspired by hope and fear; by the hope of receiving a pension from the royal purse, and by the fear of being put into the Bastille if they were to tell facts that the authorities did not wish to be mentioned or criticized. Voltaire's contemporary and a so-called friend, President Hénault, writes about those essays, that we consider so mild, dealing with princely personages in Voltaire's *Century of Louis XIV*: "Such things may be told confidentially in one's chimney corner, but one does not write them down." The President himself gave an example of caution when in his *Abrégé Chronologique* he criticized the massacre of St. Bartholomew, not in his own name, but in a quotation of the Archbishop Péréfixe.

We have seen in *Charles XII* how carefully and zealously Voltaire gathered information from eye witnesses. In the same way, he sought information and news of that century in France, which preceded his own, and he succeeded in creating a work which is of interest to the student of history even today.

He had spent his youth among the contemporaries and in the vicinity of Louis XIV, had known certain relatives of the King, such as the Duchess de Maine, and also his generals, such as Villars and Vendôme. Wherever he had stayed, in Le Temple, in Saint-Ange, in Sully, in Sceaux, in Vaux-Villars, in La Source, he had been surrounded by reminders of France's great century. His parents had been in close touch with leading men and wits. In England he had met still others who had taken part in the War of the Spanish Succession or had been witnesses of its events like Lord Peterborough, Lord Methuen, and the Duchess of Marlborough.

Before Voltaire historians did not care about the accuracy of what they told. Mézeray admits this frankly. The aim was to turn out entertaining reading matter. Some scholars like Rapin de Thoyras, the author of *England's History,* went to the sources; but these were exceptions. Rollin (1661-1741) author of a popular *History of Ancient Rome,* was undiscriminating. The Jesuit Père Daniel (1649-1728), who wrote a *History of France,* gained access to the eleven or twelve hundred volumes of documents and manuscripts in the Royal Library of Paris, spent an hour hurrying through them, and had enough. He said to Father Tournemine, the former teacher of Voltaire, that all these documents were "useless old paper he did not need in writing his history."

Voltaire, however, read everything that had appeared in the way of descriptions and memoirs, several hundred volumes, and then he extended his search to every place that he suspected notes could be found, to the Duchess of St. Pierre, whose brother, the Marquis de Torcy, had conducted the negotiations preceding the War of the Spanish Succession, to Cardinal Fleury, etc. He read the memoirs of Torcy, Dangeau, Villars, and was allowed to look through the papers of Louvois, of Colbert, and of his nephew, Desmarets de Meillevois. After the first edition the Duke de Noailles even sent him Louis XIV's personal papers, and he went over his work and corrected it accordingly. Indeed after every criticism that seemed to him well-founded, he made corrections.

No criticism was more ill-founded than President Hénault's statement, that Voltaire saw only the surface of things, that he had not the seriousness of the historian, that he belittled his native land and its great men. Hénault wrote on December 31, 1751, to Count d'Argenson: "Voltaire sent me his book. . . . I wish that his work were such that it could be admitted to France. The mistake in the first volume, a grave mistake, is that Louis XIV is not treated according to his deserts."

Compare with this the repeated statement of Voltaire's later attackers, that his history has little value because he made Louis XIV his idol and that he liked the King for the same reason that Saint-Simon disliked him, namely, that people of the bourgeois caste came into power under him.

The comparison with Saint-Simon is only confusing. In the present day, when there is little appreciation of the history of ideas, while the curiosity for anecdotes of a scandalous nature is more keenly alive than ever before, it is natural that Saint-Simon's memoirs have a greater appeal than Voltaire's *Century of Louis XIV*.

One may recall that Voltaire and his contemporaries disapproved of the purely picturesque, the little details and anecdotes that did not illustrate an idea. The pale color of the *Century of Louis XIV* satisfied the eighteenth century so well that it was received with enthusiasm. Lord Chesterfield expressed the opinion of the best people by saying: "It is the history of the human mind, written by a genius, for the use of intelligent brains."

2

After a long pause in the elaboration of the work, Voltaire started in again on it in the year 1750. He published it in 1751 in Berlin, edited and revised it again in 1756; only in 1768 did he give it its final form. It is one of the most profound works he ever wrote.

In his *Charles XII* he did not curb his hatred of war. In the *Century of Louis XIV* he is inclined to be enthusiastic over victories and conquests. However his book is not primarily written to glorify the armies of France, but French civilization of the seventeenth century, its mental development, its masterpieces of literature and art, the spread of the French language over Europe. His intention was, also, to picture the Court in which Condé, Colbert and Racine were able to meet in contrast to the Court from which Voltaire was excluded.

He did not wish to write the history of the King, but, as the title expressly says, that of the century. He is the first historian of European culture. We have seen, in the letters to Frederick the Great, that he rated the man who gave joy to the human race above the man who spreads death and destruction, the war hero. He writes: "You know that to me the great men are first, the war heroes last. I call those great men who have distinguished themselves by improving the condition or the pleasure of mankind. Those who plunder and devastate provinces are heroes only."

Voltaire in his description of men does not aim to rival the portrait painter; he never forgets his calling as a narrator. But how surely and vividly he pictures those he has seen himself! Take his description of the Maréchal de Villars.

There rose a man who seemed to give France new confidence in her destiny: the Maréchal, Duke de Villars, who later was commander-in-chief of the armies of France, Spain, and Sardinia and who, at the age of eighty-two, was still a keen, self-confident officer. By his stubborn insistence on doing more than his duty he made himself a great man. Occasionally he displeased Louis XIV and what was more dangerous, Louvois, because he answered them as sharply as he fought for them. He was reproached for not being as modest as he was brave; but at last we came to understand that he was a genius at war, and that he was born to command Frenchmen.

There is scarcely anybody who was more a victim of envy, or one who deserved it less. To be sure, he became Marshal of France, Duke and Peer, Governor of a Province; but he saved a State, and others who caused his misfortunes and who were only courtiers, received the same rewards. He was even reproached with his wealth which was nothing more than a comfortable competence, and which he had earned by levies in hostile territories that he had conquered. It was only his just reward, while those who had acquired in a shameless way fortunes ten times as great, kept them with approval from all sides. He could begin to enjoy his glory only when he was almost eighty and had outlived the entire Court.

What was at the bottom of this injustice?

One day when he said good-by to take command of the army, he said to the King before the entire Court: "Sire, I depart to combat Your Majesty's enemies and leave you in the midst of mine." He said to the courtiers of the Regent, who had enriched themselves with Law: "I for my part have never gained anything, except victories over our enemies." Such remarks, bold as his deeds on the field, were too injurious to others who were already irritated by his success.

3

We have seen that Voltaire did not regard world history as that of kings, but as the history of civilization; he did not wish to write about wars and battles, but about man's customs, the development of commerce, the progress of literature and arts, as far as one can speak of progress in connection with them; at any rate he wished to discuss their golden ages, and draw attention to the best works.

But the main point is that he, in contrast to Bossuet, wanted to write the history of the whole globe, and not only of the Mediterranean nations. He knew that the Chinese, Babylonians, Indians, and Egyptians, had a history which antedated by far that of the little Hebrew nation, and was much older than the history of classical antiquity, although the scholars ignored everything except the Greeks and Romans.

All he had to do was to drink his favorite Arabian coffee from a Chinese porcelain cup, and he felt as if he were regarding the globe.

L'Essai sur les Mœurs is a prodigious work. It takes up four great volumes, or if, like Voltaire himself, one regards the books on *Louis Quatorze* and *Louis Quinze* as sequels, then it is seven volumes.

That such a work, embracing nearly nine centuries and all countries, is not the product of independent research on the part of the author, is self-evident. However, men, who, like Lanson have studied the work in relation to its sources, have found that Voltaire everywhere stuck to those writers who were in his time considered the best authorities: in writing on Mohammed, Gagnier and Sale; on China, de Halde; on ecclesiastical history and the crusades, Fleury; on the history of England, Rapin de Thoyras; but in every case where it was feasible, he got information from the documents, to which these writers referred him.

Voltaire confines himself to the study of the habits, clothing, shelter, commodity prices, and heating facilities at various times and in various countries; he tries to make clear what provisions were taken aboard a Viking ship (he thinks there would be beer, bread, smoked meat and cheese); and he always tries to establish the period at which important inventions were made. Nevertheless his fundamental aim is purely intellectual as he steadily seeks to win his readers over to his ideals and to induce them to help in their realization.

Experience showed him that there are certain postulates for the fortune and misfortune of a nation. He discovers that misfortune, as far as man is responsible for it, has two fundamental causes: religious fanaticism, and war, which is not infrequently a consequence of fanaticism, but is also often caused by the inconsiderate ambition of Kings.

He takes it upon himself to awaken the nation to be on their guard against the bloodthirsty dogmas of the priests, as well as against ambition on the part of the rulers, which tempts them to wars. This does not mean that Voltaire criticizes the past by the standard of the present. He sees the papacy of the middle ages as the only power able to cope with the martial brutality of the worldly rulers, and he esteems the quiet study and peaceful spirit which were fostered in the medieval cloisters. He never underestimates the force for good that a wise benevolent tyrant can exercise. One should read his book on Peter the Great!

But he is horrified, on looking back in history, to see a tapestry of follies and outrages woven by the habits of generations. He is angered by his childish and servile predecessors, the earlier historians, the medieval chroniclers, as well as the clerical academics of more recent years, who glorify barbarity, deceit and lying, cloak injustice as strictness and never dare to brand the stupid pride of the rulers and the foolish and cowardly humility of the nations.

On the whole Voltaire's colossal work is surprisingly exact.

IX

TOURNAY

1

About the year 1760 Voltaire became more and more active as a protector and helper of the weak and helpless. He began to feel it his duty to be the intercessor for, and savior of, those mistreated by fanaticism.

He begins by interesting himself in people, great and small, whom he finds at the mercy of flagrant injustice.

A cousin of Pierre Corneille died poor because he had lost his fortune by vouching for a friend. The son of this man, Jean François Corneille, lived in very needy circumstances as a letter-carrier in a village near Evreux. He was without any education, could scarcely read or write, and did not even know that the name he bore was one of the greatest of France.

He was, however, told that as a Corneille he must be a cousin of the famous Fontenelle, and in his misery he decided to undertake the long journey to Paris to ask his influential relative for support and protection. But Fontenelle was then ninety-seven years old, and although he was not at all feeble-minded he had completely forgotten the branch of the family to which Jean François belonged. When the latter called himself a grandchild of Pierre Corneille, Fontenelle regarded him as an impostor; he did not know that the grandfather of his poor relation had had the same first name as his famous nephew. So Fontenelle left nothing either to Jean François or his sisters or brothers.

For a short time Fontenelle's heirs subsidized the man; then the help stopped. But an old friend of literature, Titon du Tillet, grieved to hear of the needy circumstances in which the last of the name Corneille was living, recommended him to Fréron who, as publisher of a weekly journal, had connections and influence. Fréron told Jean François to write a petition to the actors of the Théâtre Français, and they gave a benefit performance of Corneille's tragedy *Rodogune* and then another of *Bourgeoises de Qualité* for him; and as the public paid double prices and even more for the seats, no less than 5000 livres were taken in. The poor man, therefore, seemed to have been given help; but almost the entire sum was used up in paying off debts. Only a small residue was put aside to assure the twelve-year-old daughter, Marie Corneille, of a good education in the abbey Saint-Antoine. But when the father soon ran through this remainder also, he removed his daughter from the convent school.

The aged Titon du Tillet took an interest in the young girl and put her in the care of his nieces, when the young lyric poet Le Brun, who had seen her at the old man's house, got the idea of appealing to Voltaire to take an interest in her; in the name of the poet Corneille, he addressed a poetic epistle to him, setting forth that the younger rival of the great Corneille was the only proper protector of her youth. The first stanza reads:

> Un rival de mon nom (si quelqu'un le peut être),
> Voilà le protecteur que tu dois reconnaître;
> Tu peux en l'implorant l'élever jusqu'à toi.
> Voltaire est ce rival, du moins si j'ose en croire
>   Les récits que la Gloire
> Sur la rive des morts en sema jusqu'à moi.

The poem was accompanied by a letter from Le Brun. With habitual generosity Voltaire answered at once, and he resolved so quickly to adopt the young girl that he did not even take the time to get any information about her. He imagined that she was a direct descendant of the great Corneille, and did not even ask who or what her father was. He wrote: "It is only fitting that one of the soldiers of the great Corneille should try to be of some small assistance to the grandchild of his general." The young lady should be sent to Lyons to the address of Tronchin. He would have a maid call for her there in his coach.

It is impossible to express oneself with greater courtesy than Voltaire used in his answer to Le Brun. With his fine sensibilities he knew how to reverse the circumstances so as to make it seem that he had been paid a flattering attention.

"If she agrees, I am at her disposal, and I hope to be able to thank you until the last hour of my life for having given me the honor of doing what Fontenelle should have done. Part of the education of the young lady will consist in seeing us perform an occasional play by her grandfather, and we want to have her adorn scenes from *Cinna* and *Cid*."

When Voltaire learned that Marie Corneille was not a direct descendant of Pierre Corneille, he imagined that she was an offspring of the brother Thomas. That again was incorrect. At any rate he promptly wrote her a letter which not only reveals his fine feeling, but also a very special sympathy; he assures her that she would at his house find every facility for pursuing her religious obligations as far as she wished, and besides she should be free to occupy herself with music, reading and needle-work.

"If you should feel like taking lessons in geography, we will send for a teacher who will feel highly honored to instruct a descendant of the great Corneille; but I shall feel even more honored to have you in my home."

She was not to think of her wardrobe. His niece would take care of laundry and dresses. She would have the best tutors, and inside of six months she would be able to play the part of Chimène in *Le Cid*.

2

Marie Corneille arrived in December, 1760, and turned out to be very pleasing. She was frank, unaffected and lively, with a little pug nose and the loveliest eyes, and a large but charming mouth with pearly teeth. She was jolly, well-bred, and diligent, and pleased everybody. Voltaire wrote to her father congratulating him on having such a daughter, and he thanked him for having let her come to him. He was far from making her take a subordinate position in the house. She lived like a daughter of the family.

Naturally her education had to be begun all over. Voltaire taught her to write and to speak pure and cultivated French, corrected her bad pronunciation, corrected the letters he had her write to him continually. He even went to Mass with her.

Nevertheless, the sanctimonious of the provinces set up a howl that the poor girl with the famous name was being led astray by this godless seducer of youth. She had left a convent, the anteroom of Paradise, and now she was in Tournay, the anteroom of Hell! And as was to be expected, Fréron who had first been approached on her behalf, did not miss the opportunity to strike heavily. As usual, he began by expressing himself with quiet subtlety, saving his poisoned knife-thrust for the last lines. He wrote:

"One would not believe what a sensation Monsieur de Voltaire's noblemindedness is causing in good society. It is the topic of discussion in the periodicals and newspapers, and I am convinced that these reports are a real torture to the modest poet, who knows that the main merit of good deeds is to keep them secret. Also, when so much fuss is made over this matter it makes it seem as if Monsieur de Voltaire is not exactly in the habit of giving similar proofs of kindness of heart, and that it is something extraordinary for him to regard misfortune with such sympathetic eyes. And yet it is only one year since he showed the same benevolence to a certain Monsieur de L'Ecluse, a former actor of the Opéra Comique, whom he has taken into his home and whom, to be brief, he treats like a brother. It must be admitted that Mademoiselle Corneille, after leaving the convent, will come into good hands."

This malicious insinuation struck at the same time Voltaire, Mademoiselle Corneille and de l'Ecluse, who was considered a seducer, and a pander.

3

Voltaire's resentment knew no bounds. At first he answered by explaining who belonged to his household, and showing that the young girl would have there the best companionship; then he stated that l'Ecluse had indeed appeared on the stage twenty-five years ago, but that, since then he had made his living as a dentist, that he had never lived in his house, but had simply come there four months before to look after the teeth of his niece. He had a home of his own in Geneva. Then Voltaire insisted that the matter ought to be prosecuted in the criminal court; he persuaded Le Brun to get François Corneille to file suit. But Malesherbes, who had literature and the press behind him, was to Voltaire's sorrow not inclined to set the law in motion because of the offending words, and nothing happened.

The consequence was that a country nobleman who had sought Mademoiselle Corneille's hand in marriage, in the hope of winning an aristocratic and well-educated girl for a bride, withdrew his proposal; he had read Fréron's remark about her and l'Ecluse, and besides he had learned that her father was a peasant who was a rural postman. He had never read the *Cid,* and thought that he had been made a fool of when he was told that Mademoiselle Corneille's nobility went back two hundred years.

As Voltaire could get no satisfaction for his ward in the courts, he published the *Anecdotes sur Fréron.*

Fréron also attacked Le Brun on account of his ode to Voltaire. He tried to ridicule every sentence of this ode, waddled over it like a quail from word to word, and covered them all with his filth.

Le Brun was not slow to return the compliment. First he published *L'Ane littéraire ou les âneries de maître Aliboron,* later *La Wasprie ou l'âne Wasp,* both of which were filled with invective. In these pamphlets he brought to light Fréron's abysmal and comical ignorance. The latter had written about a prologue to *Quintus Curtius,* which has no prologue; he had spoken of Falaris who stretched his victims over a bed; he meant Procrustes; he had spoken of Thespis as the founder of comedy, instead of the tragedy; he had said that a Sophonisbe (in Corneille) did not speak the language of tenderness of Athalie (in Racine). Obviously, he could never have read

Racine's tragedy if he imagined that the wicked queen spoke the language of tenderness.

4

There had been talk that the Académie Française should undertake an edition of the great French writers. Now Voltaire got the idea of publishing, in order to secure a nice dowry for Mademoiselle Corneille, an edition of the works of Pierre Corneille with an introduction and notes. He wrote at once to the French Academy, appealed especially to his old protector, its secretary Père Olivet, saying that he was making bold to ask the Academy to let him have Corneille's works. He would submit his work, sheet by sheet, to the sage assembly for their advice and criticism; he would prefer to have his critique of Corneille appear as an estimate that was not his own personal view, but the consensus of opinion of the most discriminating critics.

He actually did submit the sections which were to make up his work, to d'Alembert; in reply he received many critical hints, to which, however, he paid scant attention; this was wise, for the work could not have succeeded if a dozen hands had been felt in it.

By his name alone he succeeded in interesting all the wealthy men and women not only in France but in Europe, in the work he had undertaken for the benefit of his ward. Louis XV and Elizabeth of Russia, the King and the Queen of Prussia each subscribed for two hundred copies. Madame de Pompadour and Choiseul for fifty copies each, the Court banker La Borde gathered one hundred subscribers, the combined tenants-general sixty and Voltaire himself subscribed for one hundred copies. The nobility of England, who preferred the rougher Corneille to the more polished Racine, was represented among the subscribers with many of the greatest names, Lords Chesterfield, Lyttleton, Palmerston, Spencer, the Duke of Gordon. The nobility of France was on the list with Cardinal Bernis, Count de Clermont, the Duke of Villars.

It is not too much to say that he went to this work with enthusiasm. True, in his heart he was a greater admirer of Racine than of Corneille; but since his youth he had felt warmly and strongly for the finest tragedies of the Father of French drama. With the passing of years, the worst plays and the weaknesses of the dramatist had faded from his memory, so that only the good remained in its splendor.

On coming back to it he found the splendor dimmed somewhat and the flaws reappeared in a way which shocked him. The frankness of his criticism shocked his friends even more. We have, d'Alembert's letter acknowledging the receipt of the criticism of *Cinna*, a very fine letter which delicately and considerately hints that he and the entire Academy wish that the work should become a monument and consequently wish that nobody should disagree with the commentator's estimate of one of the tragedies; therefore, Voltaire was asked to revise his criticism and to be extremely careful and considerate.

Loving the truth as he did, Voltaire found nothing to be changed.

Anyone who has read before his twentieth year this big two-volume commentary on Corneille for the first time, must have been inclined to find it reluctant, almost hostile, with its numerous objections and corrections. The writer of this book must confess to having felt almost the same way at that age, and many of Voltaire's opponents have felt, too, that a sort of jealousy of his predecessor has come over Voltaire, and instilled in him the desire to belittle him. This idea has not the least foundation. Voltaire is absolutely honest and we find educated contemporaries, as for instance Bernis, who considered he was too mild, in precisely that criticism of *Cinna* over which there was so much quarreling.

Another factor is that Voltaire's criticism, like later Laharpe's, indeed eighteenth century criticism in general, is nearly unreadable for us. We are bored to tears by their lusty expounding of lines and comments, their explanations of linguistic turns that are obscure or obsolete. That Voltaire had become more and more conservative with the passing of years and attributed more importance to rules, is the least thing against this work; its real fault is that his criticism is so scattered.

For a while one hopes to find some comprehensive estimate of the character and work of Corneille. Then one is compelled to abandon this hope. Voltaire is a philological critic, like various later mediocre critics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He goes into the minutest details, and neither sees the woods for the trees, nor the tree for the leaves.

5

Voltaire made Ferney one of the most pleasant places in France. Not only was the castle beautifully built in the style of the time, surrounded by its gardens of rare plants, but he had proven to be a useful man for the entire vicinity in which he lived. The council in Geneva gave him permission to drain the swamps which poisoned the province with their odor and made their vicinity barren.

At first Voltaire confused injustice with illegality. This happened, when he strongly supported his vassals in their refusal to pay tithes to the priest of the nearby village of Moens; for several years they believed they were not compelled to pay this tithe, but they were ordered to do so by the parliamentary court in Dijon (1758). Two of the most prominent farmers were thrown into the prison of Gex on this account, and after Voltaire had interviewed various ecclesiastical and secular authorities on their behalf, he gave from his own pocket the twenty one hundred livres which they had been unable to pay.

In the next matter which concerned the priest of Moens, a certain Ancian, the priest was unquestionably in the wrong.

One day this priest learned that three young men of the village on returning from hunting, had called on a widow, Burdet, whose reputation was not the best and were eating supper there. A certain Dubi gave him this information, and added that they were probably sitting there at that very moment, making fun of the priest. This was enough to make Ancian get up from the table at which he was eating, collect a number of farmers, enlist a few more at an inn, and set out for the widow's house. He armed his men with staves and clubs, "heavy enough to fell an ox." His ruffians surrounded the house, and he, with four or five men forced his way into the kitchen where the three hunters were sitting at their meal. His motive seems to have been that he was in love with the widow, and he shrieked at her like a madman: "So that's how you sit here and drag my good name in the mud!" He knocked down a hunting dog with his club, and when the dog's master demanded satisfaction he answered with a slap in the face. His companions attacked two of the hunters, beating them into insensibility. When the third drew his knife they hit him on the head until he lay unconscious. The farmers trampled them. When one of the three, thinking he was near death, cried out: "Shall I die without confession?" the priest called: "Die like a dog, die like a Huguenot!"

As can be seen, Voltaire here had to do with a temperamental priest. Two of the injured were too convinced of the power and the influence of the priest to dare protest. The father of the third, by the name of de Croze, filed a suit whose author is not hard to guess. Voltaire writes to Gabriel Cramer: "The case of the poor de Croze would be inconceivable in any other country than in France. A priest! A deliberate murderous assault! A priest assures his accomplices their safety! He deserves the wheel, and is still unpunished." The priest was very rich, and Voltaire hoped to procure a considerable compensation for the aggrieved. But for a long time the latter did not dare to file the suit. "He will kill me if I do," he said. "All the better," Voltaire replied, "that furthers our case." And he exerted every effort to send the priest to the galleys in order to secure satisfaction to his vassal. That, however was more easily said than done. The priest was confident of his powerful protectors. Those he had enlisted for the attack, fled. He himself stayed coolly where he was.

President de Brosses, who knew the father of the assaulted de Croze to be a decent, inoffensive man, wrote in sharp reproof of the violence of the priest; however, he reproached Voltaire openly for having become mixed up in the matter and for having prejudiced witnesses in advance, whose impartiality should have been unimpaired. He declined to include in the case the Jesuit Fessi, who was charged by Voltaire with having threatened to withhold absolution from the plaintiff's daughter, unless she induced her father to drop the case. For there was no way in which a priest could be punished legally because he had found a penitent unfit for absolution.

Voltaire had to be content that the priest was sentenced to pay to de Croze 1500 livres—which surely was a far lighter sentence than galley and wheel. Just before this Voltaire had paid 2100 livres to Ancian, to free his farmers from the tithe; so the priest could easily spare the 1500.

6

At about this time Voltaire began a lawsuit in a matter of his own. This is the one with President de Brosse, a quarrel which was due to a sad mistaking of Voltaire's sense of justice, or rather of his dogmatism.

President de Brosses who was the highest official in Dijon, within whose Parliamentary jurisdiction Ferney lay, was cultured, brilliant, sarcastic, and learned, a lively spirit in a little body, a conscientious official, inflexible as steel when it came to a question of law.

He met Voltaire in Geneva, in 1756, and was much attracted to him. He himself was a gifted writer, the author of charming letters of his journey through Italy in 1739 and 1740. Besides these he had written a profound study of Sallust, and attempted to reconstruct the lost parts of the Latin author's work. He was worthy in every way of Voltaire's friendship, and it seemed as though this friendship should have been strengthened on both sides when Voltaire purchased from him the estate of Tournay.

At first the two distinguished men exchanged compliments. Voltaire, who had bought a life tenure on the estate, had informed the President that he was making a good bargain, for at the outside he had no more than five or six more years to live. The President answered: "What? You give yourself only five or six more years? No such clause in our contract, I insist! Otherwise the deal is off. I demand, on the contrary, that after we have come to terms you shall live the century to its end to give it splendor and to enlighten it. Fate would earn itself a nice reputation if it did not let you outlive Fontenelle. It is already in too bad odor with the public to dare to fail in this." And he writes in a subsequent letter: "shall I tell you a secret? Before a man like you I shall hide nothing. When the angel of fate guided Zadig through the world, he left a talisman in this old castle (Tournay), which prevents anyone from dying there. My old uncle lived to be ninety-one years old and his grandfather eighty-seven. It is lunacy on my part to part with a place which secures a real immortality in an altogether different way than the Academy."

It would be hard to imagine a more friendly and agreeable letter from seller to buyer of a property, or a better expression of admiration for the man and his works.

After some hesitation Voltaire closed the deal. But before long he became convinced that the position of feudal lord carried certain disadvantages with it. One of his farmers, by name of Panchaud, had taken a sabre and wreaked such violent revenge upon a fellow who had stolen some nuts from him that he was almost sentenced to be hanged for it. He finally got off with exile, but was fined two hundred pistoles, which of course he was unable to pay, so Voltaire as his fendal lord was obliged to pay for him.

This legal but unfair expense irritated Voltaire and he became vexed at every bill that was presented to him as Lord of Tournay.

He himself said jokingly that he made his grand entry into Tournay like Sancho Panza arriving on the island. As a matter of fact, as we can see from a letter of the Genevese Madame Galantin, his entry was splendid. It took place on Christmas Eve of 1758. She writes:

"He was paid every possible honor; salutes from cannon and musket, drums and whistles. All the peasants bore arms. The shots frightened the horses of his coach. Little girls brought him oranges in baskets entwined with ribbons. Monsieur de Voltaire was very pleased and gay. He found a wide difference between his reception here and that at Ferney, where there were none but peasants. He was in gala attire, and his niece was decked with diamonds. . . . The priest delivered a speech. Monsieur de Voltaire said to him: 'Ask anything you like for the restoration of your parsonage; I shall grant it.' The young girls of the community brought flowers for the ladies. A gunner and several cannon had been borrowed from Geneva. The health of the new lord of the castle was drunk to the accompaniment of cannon shots. I declare, I believe that it was the happiest day of his life."

Voltaire had scarcely taken over the property when he commenced clearing, felling trees, demolishing, restoring, rebuilding, cultivating, changing, improving. He had promised to make improvements amounting to 12,000 livres before four years were up: In the first six months he had already spent 15,000 livres. The revenues of the estate were used to alleviate the great misery of the vicinity.

He had contracted not to lessen the value of the property, but to have it at his death in the same condition in which he had taken it over. The President, who was a somewhat cranky gentleman, learned that Voltaire had cleared a little forest of pine and oak, in order to make instead a meadow which gave more profit. Whereupon the President demanded an inventory of the property, in order to be able to control the changes, and empowered a Monsieur Girod to protect his interests, a move which offended Voltaire.

This was the situation when a trivial but bitter controversy arose. Shortly before Voltaire bought Tournay, trees had been felled in the forest and the wood had been sold to a wood dealer named Charlot Baudy. As Voltaire needed fire-wood to heat the rooms in the castle, President de Brosses told him that this farmer still had some on hand, and Voltaire, having just bought the property on which this wood was stacked, thought that what he required was his by right. Then when Baudy presented his bill for fourteen cords of fire-wood, he refused to pay, insisting that the wood was included in the purchase price of the property.

From this developed an argument. The President writes (on January 30, 1761):

"Baudy tells me that when he asked you to pay for the fire-wood he supplied to you, you told him that I had made you a gift of the fire-wood. Please excuse me for repeating such a statement; you will understand that I am far from believing that you could actually have said such a thing, and far from giving his word the least weight. He is an ignorant peasant who is not familiar with the custom and usage of good society, and he does not know that though one sends a basket of peaches or a half dozen fowl to a friend, any gentleman would find it extremely odd to be sent fourteen cords of fire-wood as a present. . . ."

When with his usual stubbornness Voltaire refused to pay the farmer his money, and the President demanded his payment from the farmer, this petty dispute led the President to file suit against Baudy, and Baudy against Voltaire.

The latter, whose irritation had grown to an absurdity, wrote de Brosses a furious letter, in which he stated that the President's representative, Girod, had told his niece that if Voltaire bought Tournay outright, de Brosses intended to ruin her after his death. He enlarged further upon the disadvantageous deal into which he had been led in blind confidence, and upon how much the repairs had cost him already.

The President returned the letter to Voltaire after writing his answer on the margin, probably the sharpest Voltaire had ever received from a prominent man since Frederick's irate letter about the lawsuit with Hirschel.

"Do you remember, Monsieur, the advice I gave you one day some time ago in the course of a conversation in which you told me of the complexities of your life and confessed that you were naturally inclined to be extreme and I gave you my friendship? As a sign that I have not taken it back, I am going to repeat my advice: never write letters when you are not in full possession of your senses, lest you should later have to blush for what you have written. . . . Certainly I would gladly have given you several cords of wood, had you asked me for them; but I thought that I would offend you with a gift of this sort. However, as you do not disdain it I give you this wood and shall tell Baudy about it if you will send me the following receipt:

"I, the undersigned François Marie Arouet de Voltaire, *chevalier, seigneur de Ferney, gentilhomme ordinaire du Roi,* hereby acknowledge that Monsieur de Brosses, President of the parliamentary court, has made me a gift of fire-wood to heat Tournay, to the value of 281 francs, for which I thank him."

It is sad to think that this wretched debate, thanks to the stubbornness of both parties, lasted the whole year. The process was not brought to an end, and although it is not known exactly how the affair was settled, one may draw some conclusion from the words of the President to a Monsieur de Fargès (November 10, 1761) : "In this moment I have an idea. This is the only thing to which I can honorably agree, and then everything will be over. Let him in your presence send the 281 livres to the priest in Tournay or to Madame Galantin, with instruction that they be distributed among the poor on my land, or his if he'd rather call it so; this is the shortest and most comfortable way."

Unfortunately the foolish incident was not closed with this. Voltaire considered himself so offended that in 1770, when de Brosses tried to gain admission to the Academy he wrote to d'Alembert and through him to his numerous admirers and followers, to block the election. He finally went so far as to announce that he would renounce his title as an Academician, if he were given de Brosses as colleague. The result was that another was elected. He held this grudge because he remained convinced that he had been in the right, and that he had been forced to yield to superior judicial power.

X

ADVOCATE OF THE RIGHT

1

THE fight with President de Brosses shows Voltaire in his worst light as an unjust and queer old man. As soon, however, as an appeal was made to his sense of justice and to his humanity, as soon as he heard in the air the call to take up the fight against the prevailing tyranny of unreason and fanaticism, then the man was changed, the queer, old graybeard became an undaunted and stubborn young man, the crank became the champion of justice.

Another Voltaire reveals himself before our eyes. The pettiness which disguised him has blown away or been consumed in flame.

2

A Huguenot, Jean Calas, an honest, peaceful man of sixty-three who got along well with Catholics and Protestants alike, was living in 1761 with his family in the rue des Filatiers in Toulouse, in a house where he traded in cotton goods. With his wife Anna Rose Cabibel he had four sons and two daughters. A maid, Jeanne Viguier, who was a strict Catholic, lived in the house.

One of the sons, Donat Louis, had been converted to Catholicism and seldom appeared at his parents' home; another of the sons was in Nîmes serving his apprenticeship; the two daughters were visiting friends in the country.

On October 13, 1761, only two of the sons, Marc-Antoine and Pierre, were at home. Between four and five o'clock in the afternoon a visitor appeared. Gaubert Lavaysse, the son of a well known lawyer of the parliamentary court in Toulouse. He came from Bordeaux and was passing through the city on his way to St. Domingo, as he wanted to visit his parents who were staying in the country. But he had not been able to hire a post-horse. Jean Calas invited him to supper. The young man glady accepted. After going out again to make another attempt to engage a horse for the next day, he returned for supper at seven o'clock.

During the meal, which did not last long, nothing of any importance was discussed. At dessert, Marc-Antoine, got up and went to the kitchen which adjoined the dining room. To the maid's question as to whether he was cold, he answered, "On the contrary, I am burning hot." They went to the living room and sat there until about ten o'clock, when young Lavaysse arose to take his leave. Pierre, who meanwhile had fallen asleep, was awakened to light the guest downstairs. Right afterward a cry was heard, and Jean Calas ran down the stairs.

The two young people had found wide open a door leading from the vestibule into the shop; approaching it to see if some one had sneaked in, they discovered Marc-Antoine, who had hanged himself on the cupboard doors. Over the doors a stick was laid and around it a cord was tied in a double noose, on which the body hung.

When Jean Calas got there he lifted his son up so that the stick fell down. He laid his son's body on the floor and freed it from the string. He called Pierre to summon a physician who lived nearby. In the meantime, Madame Calas had come downstairs and vainly tried to revive Marc-Antoine. When Gorsse the physician felt the pulse, he knew at once that death had come. No injury could be found on the body. But when he turned back the black neckerchief, he saw the bruise on the neck, caused by the cord. Desperately Pierre once more ran to secure aid if possible. His father called after him: "Say nothing about your brother's having laid violent hands on himself; spare at least the honor of your poor family."

Pierre hurried to one of the friends of the family, Cazeing, where he knew that Lavaysse had gone and got Lavaysse's promise to say nothing about the suicide. But nevertheless Lavaysse took it upon himself to summon a member of the council. The latter reported the case, and upon Pierre's return home an alderman, David de Beaudrigue, appeared with a guard of forty men. He arrested Pierre, who had remained alone with the body after his parents had retired. David de Beaudrigue sent for a professor of medicine, Latour, and two surgeons, Lamarque and Pyronnet: They inspected the body where it lay. Meanwhile it had become half past twelve at night.

3

In the meantime, in front of the house an excited crowd collected from which suddenly a rumor could be heard passing from mouth to mouth: "Marc-Antoine was murdered by his family because he wanted to become a Catholic."

Now a thought struck David de Beaudrigue. A fanatic himself, he seized on the explanation given by the fanatic crowd. He had the Calas couple, Pierre, the maid, Lavaysse, and Cazeing arrested and brought to the city hall where the body was brought. David de Beaudrigue was so sure of his theory, and so positive that he had arrested the murderers of the young Calas that he replied to a colleague who recommended moderation, that this was a matter of faith, and that he would take the responsibility.

He overlooked the fact that, if a murder had been committed, he had in disregard of the edict of 1670, done everything to blot out the traces of the crime. It was prescribed that the inquest should be held at the scene of the murder and nothing should be touched so that it could be seen if a struggle had taken place. But no one had taken care to leave things untouched, or to investigate whether those arrested had traces of a struggle on their hands or their clothing.

All defendants swore that they had found Marc-Antoine's body on the floor. This was correct only as far as it concerned Madame Calas and Jeanne Viguier. Jean Calas and his son Pierre and Lavaysse tried to hide Marc-Antoine's suicide, because of their fear of the shame, which was attached to death by one's own hand. A suicide's property was confiscated by the crown. The body was dragged, naked and face-downward, through the streets, and the crowd threw stones and dirt at it. Finally it was hanged on the scaffold.

It is only natural that the father wanted to spare the son's body this treatment; and it is no less natural that those who had seen the dark stripes on the neck of the body did not believe the statements of the defendants, and were equally skeptical when later on the defendants, fearing to be convicted as murderers, withdrew their statements, admitting that the case was one of suicide.

4

The deceased had been an ambitious young man; he wished to become a lawyer. But in France at that time no one was admitted to the bar until he could give proof that he was Catholic.

As Marc-Antoine did not wish to change his faith the legal career was out of the question. He had no choice but to become a merchant, in spite of his distaste for this calling. He wanted to form a partnership with an acquaintance, but was unable to raise the necessary capital, and when he then asked his father to take him into his business, he was seriously hurt by the denial of his request to become a partner rather than an employee.

He had always been inclined to melancholy. Now that everything went wrong he grew more depressed than ever; his interest in his work flagged, his energy disappeared, he became an idler, and a gambler, sat all day in the cafes and recited poetry, preferably desperate monologues on suicide from tragedies, like the soliloquy of Hamlet. This condition finally induced him to put an end to his life.

No thought was further from his mind than to become a Catholic, and no thought was further from his father than to murder him if he had. For, the third son of the family had become Catholic without having any difficulties, and the maid was a devoted Catholic and was on excellent terms with her employers. Calas was not to blame that bigoted Catholics imagined it was one of the teachings of Calvin that a father was to kill his son if the latter changed his religion. They also believed that it was one of the commandments of the Talmud that the Jews should kill a Christian child and make their bread for Easter with his blood.

The point, as to whether this was a case of murder or of suicide, was not decided by any judicial inquiry, but by the fanaticism which the court had in common with the crowd. The body was left lying in the chamber in which the defendants were tortured. On November 7, the Crown attorney put before the aldermen a motion that the body be interred. David de Beaudrigue, seized the opportunity, without consulting the board of aldermen, to approach the priest of the parish in which the Calas family lived, requesting him to bury the body according to the Catholic rites.

This move practically forced a verdict, that there was no question of suicide, and that Marc-Antoine had intended to become Catholic and had lost his life for that reason.

The burial was staged like the glorification of a martyr who had become a victim of his faith in the Church that was the One Salvation. It was fixed for a Sunday afternoon so the entire populace could show its sorrow. And with a packed congregation the Mass was held in St. Stephen's Church, and the coffin lowered into consecrated soil. As Diderot said aptly: "Only if the body of the martyr was exhumed and dragged naked through the streets, could the unfortunate father hope to be absolved from the guilt of murder."

The court of first instance was the municipal court of Toulouse. This was composed of twelve members, two of whom had purchased their positions for life. Being unremovable, these exerted the most influence and dominated the others who were elected for a limited term by the prominent citizens. In criminal cases four more were added from the city council. David de Beaudrigue a member of the court, was a conceited rogue, whose power had gone to his head. All his life was spent fawning upon his superiors and bullying those whom he had at his mercy. Beaudrigue's chief aim—as can be seen from his reports to the Prime Minister—was to draw the government's attention to his loyalty at the expense of that of his colleagues, in order to win this or that distinction from Versailles. His religious fanaticism was as great as his meanness.

5

As the depositions of the first witnesses did not give sufficient evidence for the indictment of the defendants, the Church issued a warning that anyone able to give information in this matter was to report on pain of excommunication. According to the law of 1670 the one suspected of a crime was not to be mentioned by name in such a warning; moreover the call must be for witnesses for the defense as well as for the prosecution. The law was infringed in both points. And this had far-reaching consequences. Sixty-five of the eighty-seven witnesses reported only after the issue of the warning, and the examination of witnesses was now entirely in the hands of the Church. Of all the witnesses questioned, only one, a lawyer by the name of Charlier, testified for the innocence of the father. All attempts on the part of Calas' daughters and their friends, to establish the truth, were wrecked by David de Beaudrigue. He frightened everybody who had in mind to speak in favor of Calas. As he was suspected of having tampered with the date on one of the documents (to hide its invalidity), and also as he had expressed in advance his conviction that Marc-Antoine had died a martyr's death, the defendants had the legal right to demand his removal as judge. The friends of Calas, wrote a petition to this effect, but were never allowed to file it; for, nobody was allowed to approach the accused to secure their signatures to a power of attorney. As long as the trial was in the hands of the municipal council, no lawyer was given access to the documents.

The trial did not produce any proof of the guilt of the family. Nobody could testify that Marc-Antoine had become Catholic or even thought of doing so. During the hearings snares of all sorts were set for the couple. The judge insisted that he had proof that their son was about to change his religion. The defendants answered that they knew nothing about it; their son had always been a good Protestant. When Madame Calas was asked whether, in her opinion, a father had any right to determine the faith of his son, she answered that in a matter of faith it was not the paternal authority that should decide, but the conscience and the inner enlightenment.

In the article under "Criminaliste" in his *Dictionnaire,* Voltaire says the harsh and true words:

"The judge is a barbarian in official robes, who sets snares for the defendant, lies brazenly in order to get at the truth, and frightens the witnesses so that without being aware of it they give evidence against the defendant. He drags out obsolete laws from the time of the civil wars, tries to suppress everything that might clear the defendant, and to exaggerate everything that might serve to his conviction. Not like a judge, but like an enemy, he summarizes the contents of the documents: in short, it is he who deserves to be hanged rather than his fellow-citizens whom he condemns to the scaffold."

Had the Calas really deliberately planned a murder, they would scarcely have sat calmly at the table and even invited a guest for supper. This much was plain to everybody. Therefore the court maintained that the supper was a fabrication and that Lavaysse and the maid Jeanne Viguier were accomplices in the crime. On November 10 Lagune moved that Calas, his wife and Pierre be sentenced to be hanged, that their property be confiscated and that Lavaysse be sent to the galleys and Jeanne Viguier to prison for five years.

This decision was appealed to the parliamentary court, which, because of the many illegal moves on the part of the prosecution, granted a new hearing.

6

Now the case came before the parliamentary court of Toulouse, which consisted of two judges and eleven councillors. Only one councillor, de la Salle, was convinced in advance of the innocence of the defendants, and the frankness with which he avowed it resulted fatally to them; for he was conscientious enough to declare himself disqualified on account of previous prejudice, and thus the accused were robbed of a vote. To all the other members of the Parliament, all bigoted Catholics, this was a religious trial. Sixty-three new witnesses were summoned, whose testimony naturally added nothing to what was known. Some were false witnesses, among them a certain Cathérine Damière, who declared that she had recently gone over to the Catholic faith and that Marc-Antoine had warned her against reverting to Protestantism, although she was proven never to have been a Protestant, but a Catholic since her birth.

Various articles were published in Calas' defense. One, anonymous, is ascribed to de la Salle, several others to the clever lawyer de Sudre, who thereby lost for many years his numerous clientele. For not only the populace and the clergy, but also the parliamentary circles were passionate fanatics. When Jean Calas, who was to be sentenced first, was led to his last hearing, he saw a pyre in front of the Parliament building. It was there for the burning of the book of a Protestant clergyman. But Calas, believing that it was for him and that he was to die at the stake answered without his usual firmness. His confusion was interpreted as decisive proof of his guilt.

On March 9, 1762, he was sentenced to undergo the ordinary and extraordinary torture, by which he was to be forced to name his accomplices. Thereafter dressed only in a shirt, bareheaded and barefoot, he was to be ridden to the church on a hurdle to do his penance. Finally he was to be broken upon the wheel in the Place de Saint George, and left tied to the wheel with his face toward heaven "to live there as long as God would let him breathe." His body was to be burned and his property be given the King as a fine.

The ordinary and extraordinary torture consisted partly of forced drinking of water, at the ordinary torture eight cans of water, at the extraordinary torture sixteen cans, partly of the Spanish shoe, which meant that the leg of the tortured victim was put between two boards which were screwed together as firmly as possible, after which wedges were driven between them with heavy blows of the hammer. As a rule the bones were crushed during this process. Here, too, were two degrees: There were four or eight wedges driven in. Jean Calas underwent the ordinary as well as the extraordinary torture. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century the feet and hands were twisted out of their sockets. This torture was employed in France outside of Paris until 1788.

7

The day after the sentence had been imposed it was carried out. After Jean Calas had gone through the torture and had done public penance before the church, he was led in the shirt only to the place of execution. He was tied face-outward on a St. Andrew's cross, and laid on the scaffold. Over niches in the cross lay the extremities that were to be broken with an iron rod by the executioner. Next came a few blows on the chest. The executioner's art consisted in keeping the criminal alive as long as possible, so that the spectators could enjoy his torture. Then the body was tied to a coach wheel in such a way that the toes touched the back of the head.

The report of the torture shows that Calas remained firm and again and again attested his and the other defendants' innocence. From the hurdle that brought him to the square he cried his innocence to the crowd. Even on the scaffold he did not waver. At each blow from the executioner he made only one cry. When his broken hands and feet were being tied to the wheel, one of the two Dominican monks who had accompanied him, tried once more to extort a confession from him. Calas could only murmur that he was hurt that the monk, too, believed him guilty.

In the eighteenth century the poor wretch who was unfortunate enough to remain alive on the wheel as long as two days and two nights, was strangled in some cases by the hangman. When this was to be done was determined by the humane judges, for they knew how to make one death into a half dozen.

The French people were educated to cruelty by the criminal justice of the old régime. If they showed cruelty in the Reign of Terror, it was because they had learned it from the autocracy, and it was mild in comparison with that of the Monarchy.

When Damiens had endured every conceivable torture, and the horses that were to tear him to pieces were making vain efforts, the crowd had pity only for the poor horses, and when one horse finally succeeded in pulling off a leg, the crowd cheered. Not one lady left her window seat; they looked on through opera-glasses, nibbled at bonbons, and cracked jokes; Casanova's memoirs give evidence that many looked on and were moved to lewdness.

In 1742, a certain Desmoulins was broken upon the wheel, and lived for twenty-two hours afterward, until the Parliament of Paris was asked for permission to strangle him. Shortly before the outbreak of the Revolution a broken criminal lay in the Place Dauphine in Paris for two days and nights clamoring on the wheel, and the only effect on the populace was that those living in the vicinity asked that the terrible noise which disturbed the quiet of night be brought to a stop. Voltaire often remarks that decent people who drove through the Place Grève merely asked the coachman to drive faster, and that they sought to forget at the opera what they had seen.

When the moment approached in which Calas was to be strangled, David de Beaudrigue approached the tortured man once more, to extort a word from him that could be interpreted as a confession. Calas, however, did not answer, simply turned his face away.

8

It was a great disappointment to the judges and for the Minister Saint-Florentin, that in spite of this strenuous procedure, no confession whatsoever of the murder was extracted.

The more violent wanted to proceed against the other defendants, and no means remained untried. They were intimidated by every means; they were informed that their execution, too, was awaiting them. A monk entered the cell of Pierre Calas and informed him that he was to be executed; Pierre and Lavaysse resolved now, in the hope of a milder fate, to be converted to the Catholic faith. This, however, did not keep the general prosecutor from demanding that Madame Calas, Pierre, and Lavaysse should die on the scaffold, and the maid be imprisoned for life.

Finally Pierre was sentenced to exile for life. The charges against the rest dropped. A considerable minority protested against this judgment, as the sixty-three-year-old Jean Calas, who suffered from gout, could not possibly have hanged his unusually strong, lithe twenty-eight-year-old son without assistance; therefore, if the others were absolved of the murder, the horrible execution of the father became a judicial murder.

Pierre was only apparently sentenced to exile; he was led out of the city through one gate and back again through another, and imprisoned in a monastery. Four months later he succeeded in escaping.

Lavaysse was released. Rose and Nanette Calas had fled to Montauban, where their mother, too, as soon as she had been given her freedom, took refuge. But they were not destined to remain together for long. The President du Puget, with the aid of Saint-Florentin (who as Minister persecuted the Protestants with harsh tyranny for fifty-two years) secured two *Lettres de cachet* against the daughters of Jean Calas; the Huguenots in Montauban had dared to extend their sympathy to them so each of them was taken to a separate convent in Toulouse, Rose to Notre

Dame, Nanette to the Visitandins, where they were cut off from the outside world.

9

The execution of Jean Calas made the Protestants of southern France fear new persecutions from the Catholic population as they had, at first, to believe him guilty. At first, Voltaire also believed that he was guilty. From a letter of March 22, 1762, one can see that originally Voltaire did not doubt that this Huguenot of Toulouse had wanted to sacrifice his son after the example of Abraham.

A merchant of Marseilles, Dominique Audibert, drew his attention to the contradictions in the sentence imposed as well as to the improbability of the crime itself. On March 25, he approached Cardinal Bernis and asked him for more accurate information. The truth was not clear to him yet. He wrote d'Argental two days later: "On both sides a terrible fanaticism predominates. It is necessary to get to the real truth of the matter."

Voltaire abhorred Protestantism almost more than Catholicism. "We are not much good," he says in one of his letters, "but the Huguenots are still worse." In reality they were, in his eyes, "fools and morons." All that could be said in their favor was that they were "persecuted fools." Calvin's attitude toward Servet was something Voltaire could not forget.

Voltaire had not the slightest doubt that the French Protestants, if they had the power, would not be a bit different toward other believers, than the Catholics. For he knew his Protestants in Geneva very well.

But he had the deepest distrust of the French Parliamentary courts. He knew, as he said, that there never passed a year in which the provinces did not sentence innocent fathers of families to a terrible death with the same unconcern with which one would kill a chicken in the poultry yard. Voltaire was inclined to blame the injustice at least partly on the fact that the office of judge was purchasable. This strange custom had its origin in the financial difficulties of the state under Louis XII. The King sold the office for a sum, the interest on which was supposed to be equivalent to the income of that office. Francis I, Henry II and Henry IV followed this example, and ultimately judicial seats became purchasable as well as hereditary. While Voltaire, like most French writers, regarded this condition as a blot upon French justice, Montesquieu in his day had defended the practice of purchasing and inheriting judicial offices, in spite of the inconveniences which the custom brought with it; for only the well-to-do could become judges, and minors were by no means excluded. Montesquieu stated that in the course of centuries a judiciary nobility had come into being, who put such a value upon their dignity that *la noblesse de robe* stood next to *la noblesse d'épée*. This judicial nobility would under no circumstances permit an unworthy person to become one of their number. This, however, did not hold true during the eighteenth century, where no thought was given to the reliability of applicants for the purchase of judicial office. Besides, Montesquieu's defense is colored by the fact that he himself had purchased a seat in the Parliament of Bordeaux, and sold it without hesitation in 1726.

One advantage did indeed come out of the purchasability of office, namely, that the Parliaments or Courts remained independent of the government, which, considering the power of the French monarchy, was doubtless a good thing. The King could neither appoint nor dismiss the judges. This advantage was, however, more than balanced by the fact that Parliaments not only imposed sentences but also made laws.

As legislative bodies the Parliaments were in constant conflict with the Crown, and hence they sought to rob the Crown of its most important allies, the Jesuits. To the Jesuit party belonged the entire higher clergy of France, while the Parliaments themselves were Jansenistic. Damien's assault upon Louis XV, he scratched the royal skin slightly with a knife, which was punished with such unheard-of cruelty, gave the Parliaments a chance to deal the Jesuits a decisive blow. They described the assault as a consequence of the morals of the Jesuits and referring to several century-old writings of the Jesuits, it was maintained that the *Society of Jesus* had preached the King's murder.

When Voltaire resolved to fight to establish the innocence of the executed Jean Calas he dared the opposition of all of France's Parliaments. For these it was an entirely subordinate matter whether Calas had been executed rightly or wrongly in Toulouse. At any rate he could not get any satisfaction without hurting the prestige of the Parliaments. It was the same train of thought that motivated the French General Staff about one hundred and thirty years later in the trial of Alfred Dreyfus. His innocence or guilt was of no matter; as he was sentenced, he had to remain on Devil's Island. The police commissioner Herault had even openly declared on one occasion, that no judge should hesitate to sentence an innocent man to die, if his death were to the great advantage of the general public. (d'Argenson's Memoirs, II. 110.)

10

At the beginning of 1762 the persecution of the Jesuits by the Jansenistic Parliament was fierce and passionate. It was only two years before the Edict which exiled the Order from France. Voltaire wrote on January 26, 1762, to Damilaville:

"Our infamous enemies are tearing each other to pieces. It is up to us to open fire on these wild beasts. While they bite each other we can aim at them." And on January 30th of the same year he writes to the same friend: 'The Jansenists and the Molinists are ripping each other to pieces and displaying their ugly wounds. The idea is to destroy the one party through the other, so that the ruins of both shall become a step to the throne of truth."

At the end of February Voltaire dared to publish his extract from a remarkable writing which a village priest, Jean Meslier, from Etrépigny in the Champagne, had left as his will. The writing is remarkable because in it a poor but highly talented priest, who all his life had hidden his unbelief and his passionate and enthusiastic heathenism, speaks from the grave to reveal his contempt for all Christian doctrines, and as his dying wish asks God to forgive him for having preached them.

Even more than by the passionate protest of the dead village priest, Voltaire was aroused by the *Manual for Inquisitors* which the Abbé Morellet had discovered in Italy. In the year 1758 there appeared a *Directorium Inquisitorium* by Nicolas Eymeric, a grand inquisitor of the fourteenth century. In 1762 the Abbé published an extract from it in French under the title of *Manuel des Inquisiteurs.* Voltaire was enthusiastic about the book; he compared its impression upon him with that which the view of the bloody corpse of Cæsar had made upon the Roman populace.

Now he was firmly resolved to take up the gage of battle on behalf of the Calas family. He wrote (July 14, 1762) to d'Argental: "I shall drop this matter only with my death. For sixty years I have seen and endured so much injustice that I am entitled to the pleasure of undoing this wrong."

Voltaire had to win the support of those holding the same views. He approached d'Alembert, d'Argental and Damilaville. d'Alembert was the recognized leader of the philosophes in Paris, the official representative of Voltaire. As the ambassador of the Duke of Parma Count d'Argental was in touch with the political leaders and the prominent courtiers. Damilaville, however, was Voltaire's real agitator. Through him the "brothers" in Paris received the changing watch-word handed out by the distant field-general at any time. Damilaville, as head of the internal revenue bureau, was in charge of the seal of the comptroller-general. Under the protection of this seal, letters and writings which it was better not to have opened could always reach their destination without obstacle.

d'Argental was given the task of submitting the matter to Prime Minister de Choiseul. Voltaire wrote d'Alembert (March 29, 1762): "France becomes hated everywhere. Everybody says that we are as barbaric as any feeble-minded nation which knows well how to break upon the wheel, but not how to win a fair fight, and which has progressed from the massacre of Bartholomew to comic opera. We are arousing the terror and the contempt of Europe; it grieves me, for we are intended to be agreeable."

He writes to Damilaville: "Since Bartholomew's Eve nothing has so disgraced the human species as the execution of Calas. . . . Cry out, yourself, and let others cry out! Cry out for the Calas family, and against fanaticism; the Infamy is to be blamed for their misfortune."

11

In spite of his passion Voltaire went to work cautiously and carefully, partly to make sure of victory, parly because in his innermost mind he was still uncertain; for he could not be positive that Marc-Antoine had not, as was so emphatically insisted, been converted to Catholicism. At the distance he was living, he could not be sure of having received an accurate account of the circumstances of the crime.

He therefore tried to learn all the points which were in favor of murder through the evidence of people who believed Jean Calas guilty, and tried to get new evidence for his innocence, through the statements of those who believed the murder theory preposterous.

In the first place he was interested in getting exact information as to the contents of the documents of the trial. As a historian, he approached the clerk of the court of Languedoc and expressed the hope that the Parliament of Toulouse would soon publish the documents of the Calas case, as the Parliament of Paris had published those in the case of Damien. His letter was ignored.

Next he wrote to Richelieu asking him to secure information for him. Richelieu gave Voltaire the advice to keep out of this affair and avoid all the unpleasantness and trouble it might bring him; personally, Richelieu had not the slightest doubt of the guilt of the executed man. This reply could not fail to depress Voltaire and he was still more depressed on learning that the Minister Saint-Florentin had caused the two daughters of Jean Calas to be shut up in a convent.

Voltaire was most forcibly impressed by the fifteen-year-old son of Calas, Donat, who came to Geneva. Upon hearing of his arrival, Voltaire left Ferney at once and invited him to his estate Les Délices on Swiss soil. In a letter to Damilaville, March 1, 1765, Voltaire described his first meeting with the child:

"I had the young Calas come to my house. I expected to see a young fanatic of the sort that his upbringing sometimes produces. I found a simple, naïve child, quiet and attractive, who tried in vain to keep back his tears while he talked with me. He told me that he was serving his apprenticeship in a manufactory in Nîmes, when he learned from public announcements that his entire family was about to be sentenced to death in Toulouse. He had been told that nearly all of Languedoc believed in the guilt of the Calas family. In order to escape the terrible shame he was going to take refuge in Switzerland.

"I asked him if his father and mother had been given to violence; he answered that they had never struck one of their children and that no parents could have been more indulgent and loving.

"I admit that this gave me a strong prejudice in favor of the innocence of the family. I secured further information from two merchants of Geneva who had visited at Calas' home in Toulouse. They confirmed my opinion."

Voltaire's neighborhood was soon so convinced of the innocence of the executed man that the spectators at the performance of *Tancrède* in Ferney gave ringing applause at the following words:

O juges malheureux, qui dans nos faibles mains
Tenons aveuglement le glaive et la balance,
Combien nos jugements sont injustes et vains,
Et combien nous égare une fausse prudence!

As the Protestants in Switzerland felt they had much in common with those in France, a rather large organization was formed in Geneva with the purpose of collecting funds for the support and defense of the Calas family. The main point was to win the support of influential people, and this problem naturally fell to Voltaire. He enlisted the interest of the prominent men and women who had been guests at his house.

The most zealous was the Duchess d'Enville, who used her influence at Versailles. The Duke de Harcourt and the Marquis d'Argence de Diras were the next to be convinced, and Voltaire did not rest until he had overcome the resistance of the Duke de Richelieu and induced him and the Duke de Villars to approach Saint-Florentin. It was very important to win over the Chancellor Guillaume de Lamoignon, for he presided over the court which could reverse the decision of Toulouse. It seemed almost absurd to hope to win over this eighty-year-old man, but Voltaire persuaded the Marquis de Nicolai to ask his father, the President of *La Cour des comptes,* to use his influence upon the Chancellor; he also succeeded in persuading Castanier d'Auriac, President of the Great Council, to approach Lamoignon, who was his father-in-law. To Elie de Beaumont was assigned the task of enlisting the lawyers, and Madame de Pompadour promised to speak to the King himself about Calas.

12

To attain a rehabilitation of the unfortunate family of Toulouse Voltaire needed first an authorization of the widow of Jean Calas. She had to be induced to emerge from the retirement in which she had been living since she had been robbed of her two daughters; she had to be persuaded to undertake the journey to Paris, and the lawsuit could not be filed without her presence.

At first Voltaire seemed to meet here an obstacle that could not be overcome. The poor woman was so frightened that she felt safe only where she lived in seclusion.

She was too depressed to dare a fight against the Parliament in Toulouse. She never mentioned her husband's name, always spoke only of the loss of her daughters; but Voltaire did not believe it right to seek to accomplish the reunion of the mother and her daughters until the trial that would re-establish the family honor had been started.

Voltaire made it so plain to Madame Calas that it was her sacred duty to clear her husband's name of the stigma attached to it, that early in June, 1762, she summoned up her courage and traveled to Paris, where Voltaire had promised her the friendship and guidance of d'Alembert, Damilaville and his own nephew, Abbé Mignot. As he feared that Madame Calas would not be in a position to win friends by her personal appearance, he allowed her but seldom to show herself in public.

Elie de Beaumont and Mariette had promised to take the case into court, and they waived the fee. But they could not conduct the case without knowing the documents concerning it; and the Parliament of Toulouse refused to permit them to take copies, even forbade anyone to consult the originals.

At first Voltaire had hoped that the Chancellor would ask that the documents be sent to him; as this did not happen he saw no other means than to arouse the public indignation. On July 5, 1762, he wrote to d'Argental:

"We do not demand anything more than to be told for what Calas was sentenced to death. What a terror is such a secret judgment that does not give its reasons! Is there any more awful tyranny than to be able to shed blood without having to account for it to anybody?—It is not done, say the judges.—Well, you monsters, then it must be done from now on. You do owe an account for the blood you shed!"

Parliament of course did not yield; but as Mariette filed a petition in August for the reversal of the decision, it may be assumed that Voltaire's friends in Toulouse succeeded in securing the documents secretly for copying.

The Lavaysse family showed little courage. Young Lavaysse's father, the prominent lawyer, refused to give consent in the name of his son, as it would cost him his position in Toulouse. Young Lavaysse, who was staying in Paris under an assumed name, was finally induced by d'Argental to give his signature.

13

When Voltaire wished to arouse pity for the Calas family in those who visited Ferney, he liked to introduce to them the two sons of Calas. For Pierre had made a successful escape from the Dominican monastery in which he had been imprisoned and had joined his brother in Geneva. Voltaire let Pierre as well as Donat live in Châtelaine, near Les Délices, and he subjected Pierre on his arrival to a questioning which took four hours. He wrote to Audibert in Paris: "I am spending my days and nights in writing letters to all those who can exert their influence to right a wrong that has attracted the attention of the whole world, and that, it seems to me, France's honor demands be cleared up. We have Pierre Calas here. I have questioned him for four hours; I shudder and I weep. But the point is to act."

When Richelieu visited Voltaire, he was introduced to Pierre, and this eye-witness of the occurrences knew how to describe the events so clearly that the Duke, who surely was not soft-hearted, but with all his faults was a grand seigneur, said to the young Calas: "You can count upon my influence and aid. As no longer you have a father, I shall be your father."

Before the lawyers began to act, Voltaire, as was his habit, wanted to prepare public opinion by the distribution of pamphlets. They are collected under the title: *Pièces originales concernant la mort de Sieur Calas et le jugement rendu à Toulouse.*

The first article is an excerpt from a letter of Madame Calas about what happened on that October 13, with Voltaire's comments added. The next document is written by Voltaire in the name of the young-est son, and bears the title: *Lettre de Donat Calas, fils, à la Dame veuve Calas, sa mère,* dated June 22, 1762. The letter is touching and sagacious; touching in the love the son shows for his parents, sagacious in the sureness with which it shows the madness of the accusation because of which his father was broken upon the wheel.

The next pamphlet is a contribution the intention of which was to overcome the religious prejudices. The title reads *Mémoire de Donat Calas pour son père, sa mère et son frère.* In this, Voltaire makes the young Calas, without denial of his faith, avoid every appearance of extreme piety. He speaks with such respect of the Catholic religion that Catholic readers might be intrigued by the possibility of converting him; besides that he expresses his loyalty to the King with so much warmth that every chance of calling him a bad Frenchman was cut off.

Next is the clever *Déclaration* written in the name of Pierre Calas. Voltaire had a double end in view in this. In the first place he wanted to demonstrate that it was not the fate of a single man at stake, but the importance of the public's being enlightened as to the truth. Then it meant to win by moderation, the Parliament of Toulouse. By expressing confidence that, after being convinced of its error, it would of its own accord set zealously to work to do the right thing by the victim of a judicial error.

If the inkstand had not already existed, Voltaire surely would have invented it.

These writings at first made more impression in the Protestant countries, England and Northern Germany, than they did in France. The chief reason for this was that the French government regarded Voltaire's campaign with great indignation. The *Pièces originales* were attacked everywhere and their sale forbidden. Voltaire wrote: "In France a hundred innocent men might be broken upon the wheel, and all Paris thinks of is the latest play, and of the supper afterward."

The petition of Elie de Beaumont, which was signed by fifteen prominent lawyers of Paris, threw light upon the weakness of the evidence upon which

Jean Calas had been convicted, and the illegality of the entire trial. The lawyers who supported the petition denied that anyone should be sentenced for murder of his son on circumstantial evidence only, and declared that even if one were of contrary opinion, Jean Calas could not be pronounced guilty. In conclusion they enlarged upon the necessity of taking up the trial afresh.

Unexpected help came from a respected Catholic nun. Sister Anne Julie Fraisse, into whose care Nanette Calas had been given for conversion, had become convinced of the innocence of the entire family by the statements of the young girl, and as she had influential connections in Paris, when Nanette was freed through the efforts of the Duchess of Envilles, the nun gave the girl a letter to President Castanier d'Auriac asking his interest in the family. This letter caused a great sensation in Paris and was circulated in many copies.

In the meantime, Voltaire's opponents were not idle. The *Saint James Chronicle* published a letter of Voltaire to d'Alembert, which not only disparaged the Parliament of Toulouse but also slandered King Louis and the French Ministry. When the Duke of Grafton as well as the Duke of Choiseul sent Voltaire the issue, he had only to ask d'Alembert to send the original text to Choiseul, so the latter could see that whoever had stolen it from the mails and copied it had inserted a long section that was absolutely false, which was circulated to harm Voltaire and make the matter impossible.

That the case would not be decided by justice but by politics was plain to everyone. Consequently, Voltaire was well aware that everything depended upon whether the Crown considered it politically wise to deal sharply or courteously with the Parliament of Toulouse and with the Parliaments in general. The Parliament had offered opposition to the financial edicts. But Voltaire was somewhat afraid that the Crown might consider it more politic to be complaisant.

However, on May 7, 1763, the Council unanimously ordered the Parliament of Toulouse to send in the documents of the trial. For Voltaire this was "a great day in the calendar of the philosophers."

The Parliament answered the request by demanding from Madame Calas twenty-five stamped sheets of paper and an advance of 40 ducats for the copies. She was forced to pay. Voltaire wrote (May 24, 1763): "Finally the infamous documents were mailed by the infamous judges. The Parliament of Toulouse first broke the man upon the wheel, then skinned the widow . . . O, what scoundrels!"

14

During the long interval that elapsed before the decision was handed down, he wrote among numerous other things his essay *Traité sur la Tolérance à l'occasion de la mort de Jean Calas* which was published strictly anonymously in the summer of 1763. The first attempt to smuggle a few copies into Paris was not made before November or December, 1763. The essay was put into the hands only of those who were in sympathy with the author, the Dukes de Choiseul and de Praslin, certain members of the Privy Council and Madame de Pompadour. Voltaire knew that a half century before every copy would have been burned, and he was satisfied to have the book reach only a few.

Voltaire knowing exactly how far his public would allow itself to be led, does not go so far as to suggest that the Protestants be allowed to hold their services openly. He merely advocates the principle of tolerance, reproaches the French thus: "In other countries members of different religions are able to live peacefully side by side; why should this not also be the case in France?" And he enlarges not only upon the thought that tolerance involves no danger but also that religious persecutions are the outcome of Christianity.

Beginning with the golden rule: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you," we have proceeded to: "Believe what I believe and what you can't believe, or I kill you." In civilized countries we are content to say: "Believe or I shall abhor you; believe or I shall do you evil as far as I can; you monster! you have not my religion, hence you have no religion; and consequently you are an abomination to your neighbors, your city and your province!"

Shortly after the death of Francis I several pious members of the Parliament of Provence had asked the King for troops to execute nineteen heretics whom the Parliament had sentenced; they came, and the Parliament had them massacre six thousand people regardless of sex and age; they had to atone for being born in the Province of Vaux, and for having lived for three hundred years in a barren mountain region which they had made fertile. They read freely from the Bible and followed the Sermon on the Mount. These were their only sins.

Voltaire points out how tolerant China's civilization has proved; how extremely rare cases of religious intolerance had been in ancient Greece; how the Roman Empire always remained tolerant until Christianity came to the fore. Cicero doubted everything; Lucretius denied everything; nobody reproached them for that, in the slightest degree. Speaking of Hell, Cicero says: *Non est anus tam excors qui credat* (No old woman is so silly as to believe in it). Juvenal remarks: *Nec pueri credunt* (Not even boys believe it). The senate and the Roman people set up the great principle: *Deorum offensæ diis curæ* (Let the Gods take charge of the offences against the Gods). Still later on, when Paul was accused by the other Jews of Corinth before the proconsul of Achæa, that officer answered: "If it were a crime or a misdemeanor, I would listen to you gladly; but as it is a question of the doctrine and of the words and the law among you, settle it yourselves; I have no intention of being the judge of that."

Voltaire tries to explain to his religious readers that superstition is to religion what astrology is to astronomy; the relation is that of a crazy daughter to a dignified mother. He states that it requires neither great skill nor eloquence to prove that Christians should show indulgence to each other: "Yes, I shall go even further, and tell you that one should regard all human beings as one's brothers.—What! A Turk my brother? A Chinaman my brother? A Jew? A Siamese?—Yes, of course. Are we not all children of the same father and creatures of the same God?"

It is significant that among the many things that stirred up hatred against Voltaire during the reaction after the French Revolution, this proclamation of tolerance took first place. This advocacy of religious tolerance was considered especially devilish, and fitted the picture Joseph de Maistre sketches of him in his *Quatrième Entretien des Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg:* "With a madness without equal this brazen blasphemer called himself the personal enemy of the Saviour. . . . Other cynics have shocked the virtuous, but he shocked even the vicious. He plunged into the mire; wallowed in it, gloried in it; his imagination was inspired by Hell, which gave him the power to extend himself to the farthest limits of wickedness."

The entire *Credo* of Voltairian deism lies in the final prayer which concludes the anonymous essay on tolerance:

"I turn, therefore, no longer to my fellow-men, but to you, O God of all creatures, all worlds, all times. If it is vouchsafed to us, miserable insects who are lost in the immensity of the universe, if such are permitted to ask something of you, you who are the source of everything, you whose law is immutable and external, consider us worthy of your pity for the errors which are part of our nature! May our misdeeds bring no misfortune upon us! You did not give us hearts in order that we might hate one another, hands that we might slay one another. Help us to help our fellow-men in bearing the burden of a painful and insufficient life! Do not let the trifling differences in the clothing with which we envelop our puny bodies, in our poor languages, in our ridiculous customs, in our imperfect laws, our foolish opinions, our stations in society, which seem so far apart to us, yet so equal to you—let not all these petty differences be signals for hatred and persecution among the puny atoms called mankind! . . .

"May all men remember that they are brothers!

May they all abhor the oppression of souls as they abhor the robbery which snatches away the fruits of their toil and peaceful industry! Should the misfortune of war be unavoidable, let us at least not hate and tear each other to pieces in the midst of peace, and let us make use of the brief moment we have to live, to bless equally in a thousand languages your goodness which has given us this moment!"

15

We get some idea of the callousness to human suffering that Voltaire had to contend with, and of the whole barbaric system of punishment in France, when we stop to think that with the exception of La Bruyère not a single one of the first men of France in the seventeenth century, raised any protest against the stupidity and madness of the criminal legislation.

When Voltaire and his followers tried to make humanity play some part in the administration of justice, they ran up against the solid opposition of the clerical and pious factions. Not one French priest and not one pious man in France made the least effort to help the Calas family or contributed one sou for the support of the family which, thanks to the miscarriage of French justice, had been stripped of everything, even of their daily bread. And this is all the more strange, in that the clergy of the lower order who accompanied the condemned man to the place of execution, even followed him to the scaffold, knew better than any others just what the victims of this administration of justice suffered.

The bulk of the population never objected to a punishment as long as it was cruel. It never rejected any form of punishment as inhuman; on the other hand, there were sometimes riots in Place Grève when the mob considered some sentence too severe in proportion to the crime, as for instance, October, 1770, when the two Cardon brothers were broken upon the wheel because they had held up a man in the forests of Vincennes and robbed him of a sum of fifteen francs; or as still in the year 1783, when a maid was hanged for a simple house theft.

Diderot stated (in *Jacques le Fataliste III*) that the populace went to the executions out of mere curiosity, not cruelty; he believes that people were attracted by the sights afforded by the scaffold and by the material it offered for future gossip. Voltaire himself frequently expressed his opinion that it was not pure sadism but plain curiosity that was the motive. He refers to the passage from *Les Plaideurs* of Racine when Daudin proposes to show Isabelle how people are tormented on the rack: "It's a good way to pass away an hour or two." But he knows perfectly well what a fascination the sight of suffering exerted upon his country-men.

"If the torture were a public spectacle, the entire city of Toulouse would come twice at the invitation of the public prosecutor to see the worthy Calas endure the most agonizing tortures. White-robed penitents, gray and black-robed friars, women, children, young girls, poets, Academicians, prostitutes, students, lackeys, housemaids, doctors of canonical law, all would have jostled one another for the view. In the same way they would have crowded to see the unfortunate General Lally, with a gag in his mouth, dragged to the place of execution.

"But if these spectacles for cannibals, these performances for a race which is sometimes called the most wanton and ignorant of justice in the world, if these miniature reproductions of St. Bartholomew, which transform apes into tigers, were played too often, if they were staged every day, it would not be long before people would abandon such a country; they would flee from it with horror, and never return to this land of hell, in which such barbarism takes place."

Voltaire says the same thing in almost stronger terms in a letter to d'Etallonde de Morival, who had escaped after being condemned to die as a heretic, and who on Voltaire's recommendation had secured a position in the service of Frederick the Great (May 26, 1767): "Our nation is frivolous, but it is cruel. There are in France perhaps seven or eight hundred people of the better educated class, the cream of the nation, by whom foreigners allow themselves to be deceived. Among these few there are always ten or twelve who succeed in fostering some art. And the nation is judged by these, and the result is entirely misleading. Our old priests and officials are exactly like the Druids of antiquity, who practiced human sacrifices; customs do not change."

As far as literature is concerned, there was the wildest inconsistency. Although Helvetius' *De L'Esprit* and Rousseau's *Emile* were burned by the hangman, they were displayed for sale in the windows of every book shop in Paris. As a rule, the hangman did not burn a real copy of the book condemned; the copy was kept by one of the members of the Parliament, which had condemned the book to the pyre. What the hangman actually burned were valueless papers, old Bibles and documents from old lawsuits. In the midst of the official barbarism there was all sort of comedy and humbug, as in Russia under the Czar.

In the last section of his book on tolerance Voltaire mentions a letter he says he had received from Toulouse, in which he is threatened with having his essay burned publicly by order of the Parliament. He answers that he did not care. "For this essay on tolerance is a petition which is addressed to the mighty of this earth in the name of the human race. It is only a seed; but some day it will ripen to be harvested."

16

In 1762 the Jansenistic Parliament of Paris ordered the seizure of all properties belonging to the Jesuit Order for worldly use, and a royal edict of November, 1764, expelled the Jesuits from France. This victory of the Parliaments over the Jesuits, however, made them reckless. It strengthened their opposition to the passing of the tax-bills which the Crown had found necessary to put through to pay for wars. It was especially menacing to the Crown that the Parliaments had begun to unite.

The year 1764 finally brought the verdict of the Conseils in the Calas affair. In the previous year deputies from Toulouse had again come to Paris to prevent the reversal of the decision. But now the Conseil had no reason for consideration; for the Parliament of Toulouse had begun openly to resist the Government. When the King, in September, 1763, had sent the Duke de Fitz-James as Royal Agent to Toulouse to effect the passage of the finance edicts, the Parliament had replied by issuing a warrant for the arrest of the Duke. Even his life was threatened, so that he saved himself only by flight.

But by this the Parliament of Toulouse forfeited the good-will of the Parliament of Paris. For the Paris Parliament was the Tribunal of the peerage, and no other court in the country had the right to assume unto itself the prerogative of accusing or imprisoning a Peer of France. At Court this arrogance on the part of the Parliament of Toulouse was regarded as an insult to the entire French nobility, and the members of the Conseil, who took the part of the Nobility made use of the occasion for revenge on the Parliament of Toulouse.

The Referee of the Privy Council for Petitions, Monsieur de Fargès, demanded that the Parliament of Toulouse be called to account for its unjust and barbaric procedure in the Calas case, and when he was requested by the President of the Conseil to withdraw such violent expressions, he declared that he would be answerable for his words; the case was not such that there was any cause for consideration.

After examining the documents the Conseil declared that the judgments of the Parliaments of Toulouse of March 9 and 18, 1762, were violations of the law and were therefore void. By referring the case to the State Council instead of demanding a retrial, it struck at the other Parliaments also; for this procedure cast a doubt upon their impartiality. That the Parliament interpreted the verdict as a direct insult, is obvious. Voltaire was flooded with anonymous letters, in which all members of the Calas family were declared to be guilty, and whose writers were sorry that they had not all been broken upon the wheel; other letters voiced such dire threats against him as the instigator of the entire proceedings, that he was glad not to be in the court district of Toulouse and in the power of the Parliament of Toulouse.

17

When the trial came before the Court of State Referees it was possible to bring out all the evidence of the innocence of the Calas family, which had been criminally withheld. Now everyone testified to what a just, mild man old Calas had been, what a wholesome family life had been led in his house, how Marc-Antoine had appeared until the last hour an over ardent Calvinist. A letter was produced, dated in 1761, in which Marc-Antoine called his brother an apostate.

Once more Voltaire spoke. Several days after the verdict had been announced, there appeared in Paris a pamphlet printing his fine letter to Damilaville, quoting several sentences about his first impression of Donat Calas. The letter once more retraces the entire matter from its first beginning, with extraordinary eloquence and cleverness, and connects it with the similar case of the Sirven family, with which we have not as yet had an opportunity to get acquainted.

In February, 1765, David de Beaudrigue had been dismissed. The pretext was some arbitrary act of which he had been guilty.

On February 28 all members of the Calas family had reported as prisoners to the Conciergerie.

Jean Calas was found innocent and awarded a reinstatement. Madame Calas, Pierre Calas, Lavaysse, Jeanne Viguier were acquitted.

Voltaire wept for joy when he received the news at Ferney, and he embraced young Donat Calas, who was at his house. He felt that he had never experienced a purer joy, and he probably never won a more decisive victory for humanity. Before he even learned the details of the judgment, he wrote a fine letter to Madame Calas.

The new judgment did not go so far as to demand compensation from the judges in Toulouse, and Voltaire decided to let it go. He was afraid of the revenge they might take on the Calas family.

The Parliament of Paris had put every conceivable obstacle in the way of the dismissal of the charges. Carmontelle had made a drawing of the Calas family in the Conciergerie, and when Grimm had it engraved to sell it for the benefit of the family, the Parliament prohibited the sale, an illegal act, as Grimm had permission. But the Parliament claimed that the sale of this engraving would tend to further the heretical ends of the Protestants. In Toulouse the judgment of the state referee was not even posted. But this was just an empty demonstration. As Voltaire wrote, for the first time since fanaticism began to rage, the voice of the wise had silenced the voice of the pious.

Of course, the guilt of the accused family was still insisted upon. It was even said that in his innermost soul, Voltaire himself was convinced of their guilt. This same thing occurred in the last years of the nineteenth century in the Dreyfus affair, when the guilt of the Captain was violently insisted upon and the good faith of his defenders was questioned.

As was to be expected, Fréron came on the scene most ardently. He pretended that he had received a letter from "a protestant philosopher," with the request that he print it in his periodical. Nobody, he states, had felt more sorrow at the fate of the unfortunate family than himself; but the point was to evaluate properly the pretty conclusions of Monsieur de Voltaire.

In reality the letter was full of doubts as to the innocence of the Calas family and contained a sort of defense of the authorities in Toulouse. It belittled as much as possible the unselfish motives of Voltaire in the affair, and offended him most deeply. "Under these circumstances," wrote Fréron. "Monsieur de Voltaire's poetic head grew hot. He was not so much carried away by the feeling of humanity as by the urge to recall public attention to his existence to do something to make people talk about him."

Voltaire did not have to answer Fréron. Others answered for him. The Marquis d'Argens, Brigadier in the Army, was so angered that he printed an open letter to Voltaire about Fréron, which, as Grimm says, would have provoked any man with the least shred of honor in his make-up to kill its writer or to die by his hand. Fréron, of course, made not a move in reply.

A perfect critic like Fréron would naturally be a zealous crusader for sexual purity. He hated Mademoiselle Clairon, because he knew her friendship for Voltaire; he therefore praised another actress, Mademoiselle d'Oligny, for the chastity of her private life. dropping such hints as to the debauched past of a certain other actress that his reference to Mademoiselle Clairon was unmistakable. All the actors took the part of their colleague, and approached the Marshal of Richelieu, who in turn, went to the King; who gave Fréron a heavy prison sentence. The critic pretended, however, to be bedridden when the police called for him, and made use of the delay to call upon the pious Queen, who pardoned him "for his piety and zeal in combatting the philosophes."

Fréron's last act concerning the man he had persecuted for a generation, took place when a statue was to be erected to Voltaire in his lifetime; the critic asked to be permitted to send a contribution. He was refused.

When he died in 1776, his widow had the priceless audacity to write to Voltaire asking him to adopt Fréron's daughter as he had Corneille's. Voltaire did not find the comparison apt.

18

The fame of the Calas trial traveled all over the globe, but this did not mean that the Protestants in France were to enjoy the same rights as the Catholics. But Jean Calas was the last Protestant who was sent to the scaffold by Catholic fanaticism.

The Calas and Sirven families are the two most famous cases in which Voltaire interfered.

But in not a few other cases he played the rôle of rescuer, without attracting attention.

Thus in 1764 he succeeded in freeing Claude Chaumont who was on the galley bench because he had committed the crime of attending a Protestant service. The Duke de Choiseul interfered, but he could not free nearly as many as he wished, because he had to consider the Minister of the Royal House, the Count de Saint-Florentin whose orthodoxy was proof against every test. But Voltaire succeeded in freeing the Protestant Paul Achard who had spent nineteen years in the galleys, and Jean Pierre Espinas who had spent twenty-three years there because he had given lodging to a Protestant clergyman for one night. All Espinas' property had been confiscated, with the exception of one third, which was divided among his relatives. After his liberation Voltaire succeeded in negotiating the award of a pension to his family, equivalent to the interest on his former fortune. The last Huguenots in the galleys for attending a Protestant ceremony were not freed until the next reign, in 1775, when Voltaire's pupil Turgot had become Minister.

19

The trial of Calas was still going on when another case of the same sort came up. Voltaire had now become the unofficial Bureau of Appeal to which all complaints against judicial fanaticism and unfairness were brought.

The Sirven family was suffering the same accusation as the Calas family, and an attempt was being made to connect the two cases to convince the population that the Protestants made a practice of murdering all of their children who turned to Catholicism. The fact that the innocence of the Sirven family was obvious to everybody with any common sense did not make the matter any easier for Voltaire. On the contrary, the case presented such great difficulties that the acquittal of Sirven required nine years, while the vindication of Calas had taken only three.

Pierre Paul Sirven, of the city of Castres, belonged to one of the most prominent families of the Province. He was married and had three daughters. His profession was that of a surveyor and feudiste, e.g., he was charged with keeping in order the feudal lists, in which the inventory and the taxes of the manor lords were recorded. The eldest daughter had married a certain Périer; Elisabeth and Jeanne were unmarried.

On March 6, 1760, the daughter Elisabeth, who was a little deficient mentally, disappeared suddenly from the house. The day passed in a vain search. In the evening her father was summoned to the Bishop at Castres, who informed him that Elisabeth had confided to him her wish to change her religion and that consequently he had sent her to the convent of the Black Ladies, so that she might be given the teachings she craved so much. The father knew at once that his daughter must have acted under the influence of a zealous sister of the Bishop. But he answered with great self-restraint that he had never had an inkling of Elisabeth's desire to be converted to the Catholic faith. Naturally, such a desire hurt him, but he did not believe he had any right to oppose it; for he knew that she had come into good hands.

The stay in the convent made the condition of the feeble-minded young girl still worse; soon she showed signs of complete mental derangement. She had delusions, spoke to angels; in her mania of asceticism she tore all the clothing from her body, asked to be flogged to do penance. The servant-maid at the convent accommodated her with several lashes, and then she did not want any more. Her condition improved so little that at the Bishop's order she was sent back home, after a stay of seven months in the convent. On her body she showed traces of the lashes. Spells of madness became more frequent and sometimes developed into such furious outbursts that it was found necessary to guard her or tie her down.

But when this became known, it was interpreted as mistreatment and an unjust curbing of her liberty, and the Black Ladies therefore reported Sirven to the Intendant of the Province so that he received the order to let his daughter visit the church and the Black Ladies in the convent. Feeling the threat of danger in advance, Sirven at once declared that if his daughter was to be given religious instruction, he asked that she be taken back to the convent; he would not put any obstacles in the way of her changing her religion. But after an examination by physicians, the authorities in Castres refused this.

In July, 1761, the Sirvens moved to Saint-Abby, fifty miles from Castres, where Sirven was to work for a Monsieur d'Esperandieu, who had prepared an apartment for him and his family. More than a quarter of a year passed quietly. But one day, early in November, the Abbé Bel, Curate at Aignes-Fondes, entered the apartment, called Elisabeth and commanded her mother to leave her daughter full freedom to go to the church of Saint-Pierre de Frontze to hear Mass and take her instruction in religion. Madame Sirven answered that she had never thought of resisting Elisabeth's religious vocation, but that for certain practical reasons, which she would name to the Abbé later, she did not believe it advisable to let her daughter go alone that far.

When Sirven came home, he was frightened at the possible significance of this visit. He went to the curate, who informed him that he had merely been acting at the order of the parish priest. But Sirven sensed a conspiracy, and said so frankly to the curate; he made up his mind that upon his return on December 16, he would take his daughter Elisabeth to the Bishop at once.

He called upon Abbé Bel to tell him his intentions and to learn whether he had not received an order concerning him. Then they went to the château where they had supper with Monsieur and Madame d'Esperandieu and the family. A Monsieur Carcenac came during the dessert and left with the Abbé at eleven o'clock. Sirven remained for another three-quarters of an hour to look through some documents, with Madame d'Esperandieu, and then was conducted by a servant to the bedroom situated next to the living-room. He got up the next morning at seven o'clock and waited in the living-room for the lady of the house, who wanted to ask him to do an errand in Castres. About one hour had passed when a messenger from Saint-Abby informed him that his daughter Elisabeth had vanished in the middle of the night, and that nobody had any idea of her whereabouts.

Sirven set out at once and arrived before ten o'clock in Saint-Abby. His wife was so sick with anxiety that she could scarcely speak, and one of those present had to tell him the events of the previous night: between twelve and one o'clock Elisabeth had gotten up, had gone through her mother's bedroom and to her question had replied that she wanted to get some wood. She did not return. Her sister Jeanne looked for her in vain. From the people living in the basement it was learned that the house door had been unlocked and that someone had gone out.

Sirven spent several days in trying vainly to find his daughter. Finally the family concluded that she must have gone back to the Black Ladies and was in hiding in the convent.

On January 3, 1762, Sirven had gone on business to Burlats, when he was called back to Saint-Abby by the news that some children, who had been birdnesting with straw torches, had dropped several burning straws into the well, and by their light had seen a body down in it. The next morning a messenger was sent to Mazamet where Trinquier the Procureur of the town lived. This Procureur was a petty merchant who had been in bad circumstances and who had been elected a magistrate.

Trinquier was proud of his dignified position, but not so proud that he would not obey every hint that was given him from above. And there was no lack in such hints. And the authorities in Toulouse were anxious to confirm the suspicion against the Calas family by a further example of Protestant murder of apostate children.

In the beginning nobody doubted that the mentally defective young girl had jumped into the well. From January 6 to 10 all inhabitants of the village were questioned and of forty-five witnesses not one was unfavorable to the Sirven family. Then somebody voiced the suspicion that Elisabeth Sirven had become the martyr of her inclination to the Catholic faith, and at once the suspicion grew. The Calas case spread the contagion. The supreme authority, Landes, did not want to be outdone by David de Beaudrigue and he received from the prosecutor-general in Toulouse a written request to proceed unsparingly against the Sirven family.

As the girl's father proved that he spent the evening and the night at the château with Monsieur d'Esperandieu, he could not possibly have thrown his daughter into the well himself. The sixty-three-year-old mother was small and weak, and the eldest daughter was pregnant. Elisabeth was unusually tall and strong. The female members of the family could not possibly have dragged her to the well, at least not without anyone's hearing a sound; but the inmates of the house had heard no struggle, and they could be positive that one person only went out of the door. This must have been Elisabeth as neither the mother nor one of the daughters could have sneaked out with the body.

As the Procureur Trinquier simply wished to impose a sentence on the family, he did not consider these circumstances. He took care not to summon any witnesses who could establish Sirven's alibi, and none who could testify as to the quiet at Sirven's house. Seventeen witnesses were questioned who gave credible evidence regarding Sirven's alibi as well as Elisabeth's insanity. As several more hearings were to take place on January 20, Trinquier tried to secure an order for the arrest of Sirven.

Landes would not agree to this at once; but he yielded when it became known that the lawyer Jalabert had offered money to the physicians who had performed the autopsy, if they would let him have their opinion. Trinquier considered this a proof of guilt, although the verdict of the physicians had long been filed and could not have been changed by the information. On January 19 the warrant for arrest was issued.

20

As soon as Madame Sirven heard about it she and her daughters hastened to Castres to warn her husband, as the mounted police had been ordered to arrest all four.

Knowing that he was innocent Sirven took the news very calmly; but well-meaning friends advised him of the necessity of fleeing to escape the threatened arrest.

All four slipped away in the middle of the night, in rain and darkness, on roads on which they bogged and slipped in the mud. After five hours they came to Roquecombe, only a mile away.

The greatest hardship to the unhappy family was the necessity of separating so they would remain unrecognized. Sirven at first hid for three days in a dairy belonging to a nobleman he knew. On learning that immediately after his flight a squad of horsemen had appeared at his house and confiscated all property, he felt he was no longer safe there; he fled up the mountains which belonged to the Arétat estate, three miles from Castres, and remained there a month.

Fearing to fall into the hands of the police, his family set out and after six days reached Monredon, which lay still nearer to Castres than Arétat. Here they decided that safety demanded that the women, too, flee separately. The old mother slipped away by one road; the eldest daughter, whose pregnancy had by then advanced considerably, took another, and the young Jeanne took a third. By detours they reached Nîmes. Thence they rode on horseback over difficult mountain trails again making detours in order not to be caught, crossing the Rouergue mountains and the Cevennes. One can get some idea of the hardships which they suffered on reading that the pregnant Marie-Anne fell from her horse eleven times during the two and a half months the journey took.

Sirven himself, who had taken refuge in the rocky region, received there daily alarming news. He resolved to set out again in order to cross the borders of France. In the severest season of the year he wandered over the snow of the Rouergue and Velay mountains, crossed the border, reached Geneva and arrived in Lausanne in the beginning of April. It was not until June that his wife and two daughters met him there.

The wretched provincial court issued against the unfortunate family a first monitory, which without any regard for the special circumstances seemed to have been copied word for word from that against the Calas family; then a second, and then a third. The judge in Mazamet was even so bold as to ask the lawyer Jalabert why he, who was of Catholic faith, defended a case which was just the contrary of this faith.

Jalabert could not have foreseen that so much fuss would be made over his trifling carelessness in offering money to the physicians for their opinion. Indeed the physicians themselves considered his request very innocent; afterward they invited him to lunch and when he declined they drank wine with him; they saw in his proposal nothing more than curiosity and zeal for his clients.

In addition to the very minor piece of evidence furnished by this offer, there were two more. One was the verdict of the physicians in which originally nothing was said about the cause of death; but later upon request, it was added that Elisabeth had been strangled before being thrown into the well. This they tried to prove by the circumstance that no water was found either in the stomach or in the intestinal tract. The Faculty of Medicine of Montpellier commented scornfully on this report, that the very findings which it reported were conclusive evidence that Elisabeth had not been strangled, but had found her death in the well; the Faculty accused the court physicians of gross ignorance, as they did not know how the question of drowning should be decided, namely, looking for water in the wind-pipe and lungs; for drowning is caused by suffocation, resulting from inhaling water instead of air. The unfortunate part about it was that the physicians had not even sinned out of ignorance, but out of their "readiness to serve," as one of them, a certain Gallet-Duplessis, later frankly admitted. He had given his opinion against his better knowledge.

The third piece of evidence was the unexplained disappearance of the body. It had been left in a room of the city hall. In the night of January 5 and 6, 1762, the body disappeared. It was concluded that Sirven had caused its removal—which was nonsense, because it would have been buried in a few days and because the verdict of the physicians had been long on record.

Even assuming the nearly impossible, that Sirven, from the distance at which he was hiding, had succeeded in having it removed, the most that could be inferred was that he wished to avoid a burial in the Catholic cemetery. Which again was foolish, because he had voluntarily given his consent to his daughter's change of faith.

Now the same technical legal errors were made as in the Calas trial: only accusing witnesses were allowed to testify; in the same way the monitories clearly named the persons against whom evidence was sought; and a number of unprovable assumptions were put down as facts. The hearings took so long that they were concluded only in February, 1763; and Trinquier let the case drag on for another full year before he moved in court to have Sirven broken upon the wheel, then burned alive, and his ashes scattered to the winds. He asked that Madame Sirven should be hanged and both daughters should attend the execution of their parents; after which they should be exiled.

The decision lay with Landes. He declared the defendants guilty. In one hour he examined the evidence of several hundred witnesses and pronounced the sentence. The defendants were sentenced on March 19, 1764, although they were absent. Sirven was not to be broken upon the wheel and burned, but hanged instead. His wife was to be hanged likewise. The daughters were to attend their parents' death on the scaffold. The flight of the family was regarded by Landes as a confession of their guilt.

Voltaire addressed him: "You wretch, did you perhaps suppose they would stay there and let you exercise your mad fury on them?"

A sentence given in the absence of the accused did not require ratification by the Parliament, because those thus sentenced were not permitted to appeal. The Parliament simply delegated the lower court to carry out the sentence. This was done on September 11, 1764. In the market place in Mazamet two dummies, representing Sirven and his wife, were hanged on the scaffold. The two daughters looked on at the execution, in the form of two more dummies.

Legally, however, it was made to look as though the Parliament had not confirmed the sentence of the lower court. Voltaire in his contempt for this sophistry wrote to Elie de Beaumont (September 26, 1765): "To issue a permit for the dishonoring of a man and the confiscation of his fortune, that's not a sentence, oh no! The decision of the lower court must seem to the Parliament either just or unjust. In ordering the execution it ratifies either something just or something unjust."

21

As soon as the Sirven family was on Swiss territory it was introduced to Voltaire. About this he wrote three years later to Damilaville (March 1, 1765): "Imagine four lambs accused by the butchers of having devoured another lamb. So much misfortune and innocence cannot be described."

As first, Voltaire dared not help the family in any other way than by putting his time and his purse at its disposal. Otherwise it would have been impossible for him to bring the Calas affair to a happy end. If these cases should be repeated too often, the Catholic public could easily become convinced that there was some truth in this rumor that the Protestants were infanticides. Also the sympathy for both families might lessen; for the Calas because the wrong done them was no longer a unique case, and for the Sirven because none of them had actually been imprisoned or hanged.

In the meantime he was content to contribute, generously as always, to the support of the poor people who had been bereft of all their means by French Jurisprudence.

Many critics jeered at Voltaire for the zeal he had shown some time before at building up a fortune and later at keeping it intact, while at the same time, he gave away the profits from all of his books as well as all his income from the theater. They should have considered how useful it was for the human race that a fortune which was used only for the best purposes, for once in history should come into the hands of a writer of unchallenged greatness, who did not have to cringe for the favor of a royal patron. Instead of having to be silent before his contemporaries for fear of forfeiting a wretched pension, he stood guard not only protected by his pen, but also giving numerous unfortunates and victims of injustice, refuge, food, clothing and a chance to work themselves up again.

This time the difficulties Voltaire met were tremendous. There was nothing to take hold of in the Sirven case. Voltaire risked the reputation he had won as the defender of Calas, should he suffer defeat, and how could this be avoided? All of those who hated him, and hated him doubly for his latest triumph, lay in wait for him to destroy him and the effect of his former victory.

The general public was apathetic. If its interest was to be awakened at least a few members of the house Sirven had to be sent back to be broken upon the wheel or hanged. It came to this: they had all been sentenced in their absence, and in order to have their case taken up again and their innocence established, they had first to surrender themselves to the court in Mazamet and then to the Parliament of Toulouse. The latter, to avenge itself for the disgrace it had suffered by the justification of Calas and his entire family, would surely have had all of the Sirvens broken upon the wheel or hanged. If anything was to be attained, Voltaire had to succeed in bringing the case before a different court.

22

When he began negotiations with the Parliament of Toulouse, he spoke as one power to another. He would let the Sirvens appear there only on the condition that the court should be open to conviction on the subject of their innocence. When the Parliament agreed to commit itself on this point, he had a petition presented to the Vice-Chancellor. The latter held out the prospect of a pardon. But a pardon was not what Voltaire was seeking. He wanted justice.

Voltaire's friends in Paris were enlisted once more. Elie de Beaumont again promised to draw up a petition. Then all the Protestants in France gathered about Voltaire who undertook to "put all Europe to work on the Sirven affair." He induced Sirven himself to write his own account. Voltaire sent it to Elie de Beaumont with the words: "The innocence of the Sirven family is even clearer than that of the Calas family: there is not the slightest indication of any guilt here. One is ashamed to be a member of the human species when, in the same country, one sees one place giving comic operas while in another fanaticism presses the sword into the executioner's hand."

Elie de Beaumont sent Voltaire a whole packet of questions which he wished answered. It was not easy to get answers from Sirven. He did not know much about his trial, not having been present at it, and he was not especially clever and had become vague and confused by his misfortune. His property had been confiscated, his eldest daughter had broken down completely under her hardships. His wife, whose life was shortened by the persecutions, had died in the spring of 1765.

The thing to be done first of all, as in the other trial, was to get a look at the documents of the case. After some efforts copies of the documents of the court in Mazamet were obtained. But the Parliament of Toulouse flatly refused to give a copy. At first Voltaire thought of registering a formal protest in Toulouse, to be able more easily to have the case removed to another court, which would order the Parliament to surrender a copy of the decision. He abandoned this, however, in view of the danger involved.

Finally, after two years of perseverance, Voltaire came—it is unknown how, perhaps by bribery—into the possession of a copy.

Again the fiery and impatient man had to sit back and see how efficiently the French judicial system could waste time. He had based high hopes on the petition of Elie de Beaumont. But the latter did not hurry himself unduly at drafting it. He saw that the public had lost interest in religious trials, and as there was no glory in it for him, he took his time about it.

In January, 1766, Voltaire finally received an outline of the petition and read it with the greatest satisfaction; he sent for Sirven to come and see it, and, as, he wrote to the lawyer, for a moment he was afraid that Sirven's tears of joy would efface the script. In a letter to Beaumont he had called the latter's petition for Calas "a work of eloquence," but this outline was "the masterpiece of a genius." He wrote to d'Argental (February 10, 1766): "This case moves my whole soul. Tragedies, comedies and theaters mean nothing to me. The time goes so slowly. I wish that Elie's petition were already published, so that all Europe might resound."

But Elie de Beaumont's phlegmatic attitude was a strong contrast to Voltaire's fiery spirit. For reasons which became clear much later, he did not care to get his petition ready for the printer, and it was now up to Voltaire to console and encourage Sirven, while at the same time he had to be careful not to let Beaumont notice his impatience; if the lawyer were offended there was the danger that he might drop the affair entirely, and they would have to start all over again with a new, less famous advocate.

23

In the meantime he tried to secure influential protectors for Sirven. Grimm gave him a list of those who could be won in Germany. Voltaire wrote to the Count of Hessen-Cassel, the Margravine of Baden, the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha, the Princess of Darmstadt, the Princess of Nassau-Saarbrücken, all of whom sent him sums of money. Madame Geoffrin, who had gone to visit Stanislaw Poniatowski in Varshaw, sent 200 ducats from the Polish King to the Sirven family. The Empress Catherine sent a considerable sum and wrote: "Woe to the persecutors!" Frederick the Great sent a money gift and offered to give the family a residence in Prussia. Christian VII of Denmark sent a letter enclosing a round sum.

Hoping that Elie de Beaumont's petition would shortly be going to press, Voltaire enclosed in the letters to those whose interest he was trying to solicit, a little article *Avis au public sur les parricides imputés aux Calas et aux Sirven.* He was already confident of victory when he was struck an unexpected blow in the form of a new and still more terrible case. Now he had to doubt his ability to bring the case of Sirven to a happy conclusion.

On July 1, 1766, the young Chevalier de La Barre was broken upon the wheel in the market place in Abbeville, on a charge of blasphemy.

XI

THE FLAME OVER EUROPE

1

Voltaire was well aware that his name was anathema to the Calvinists, and for his part he despised them for their narrowness. But the fact that his name shone like a flame all over Europe and that the Protestants in France had no other protector, caused a general pilgrimage of Protestant clergymen to Ferney.

The first thing the unfortunate Chaumont, whom Voltaire had freed from the galleys, wished to do, was to call upon his savior and thank him. His crime had been to attend a Protestant service. A Protestant clergyman who took him to Voltaire has described the scene for us.

"I told him that I had brought along a little man who wanted to throw himself at his feet to thank him for his liberation from the galleys, and that it was Chaumont whom I had waiting in the anteroom and for whom I asked admittance. At the name Chaumont Monsieur de Voltaire rang at once. Never did I see such a funny and at the same time enjoyable sight.—'What, you poor, brave man, you were sent to the galleys for the crime of having prayed to God in wicked French (not Latin)?' He called several people, who were at his house, to see the poor Chaumont who, though neatly dressed considering his circumstances, was quite confused to see himself being made so much of. Even the ex-Jesuit whom Voltaire had taken into his home (Father Adam) congratulated Chaumont."

At the same time, Voltaire was in bad repute with the Jansenists of the Parliaments. After his defense of the Calas family he had become the object of the bitter hatred of the Parliaments. The Parliament of Paris had Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique* burned by the hangman.

More dangerous than his repudiation of the concept of "the Revelation" in the *Dictionnaire* proved his allusions to the Parliament; for instance, in the article entitled "Tyrant" he said "It is better to have to do with a single tyrant than with a whole flock of little tyrants."—The Parliament took this as applying to itself.

Following the suggestion of the Attorney General, the Parliament had ordered an investigation to determine the author of the *Dictionnaire*. Voltaire, having been forewarned that "from all sides the thunderstorm against the *Dictionnaire* was gathering," had quickly denied his authorship, which, of course, was a mere formality, as all of France knew the truth.

In the trial of La Barre which was now commencing, the *Dictionnaire* both in its unabridged form as well as in the shorter *Le Portatif*, was used as weapon against Voltaire and his followers.

2

In the night of August 8 to 9, 1765, a wooden crucifix which stood on the Pont-Neuf in Abbeville had been damaged by several blows of a stick, and at the same time a cross in the cemetery Sainte-Cathérine had been smeared with dirt. The little town got wildly excited. Anger was universal. An investigation was instituted to determine the perpetrators of these blasphemies and a monitory issued in the interest of the investigation.

The clergy and authorities asked the Bishop of Amiens, Louis de la Motte, to come to Abbeville to do penance with them, to ward off the wrath of Heaven. Barefoot and with a cord around his neck, the Bishop headed the procession which was attended by the entire town.

The day after the procession, which had caused wild excitement, the second bill of indictment for the incident was filed, based on the testimony of a certain Belleval, member of the revenue board of Abbeville; in it the godless language said to have been used by three (so far unnamed) young men was rebuked;

they were charged with having passed the procession on the Corpus Christi Day without genuflection or obeisance. On August 26, warrants were issued for the arrest of the Messieurs de La Barre, d'Etallonde and Moisnel. D'Etallonde had wisely fled long before.

Jean François Lefevbre, Chevalier de La Barre, was the son of a lieutenant-general, who had run through the family fortune and afforded his son only a mediocre education. As a half-grown youth he had come to Abbeville where a relative, the Abbess of Willancourt, Madame de Brou, had taken an interest in him, given him an education and tried to procure him a company of cavalry. He lived outside of the abbey, but had his meals with his aunt, at the table of the Abbess. He introduced to her his friends who were members of the most prominent families. The young people indulged in merry and sometimes reckless language, which by no means offended the Abbess, but rather entertained her.

In the excellent work by Edward Hertz: *Voltaire and French criminal jurisdiction in the eighteenth century,* the author, who studied all the documents of these trials, enlarges upon No. IX, and writes:

"Belleval, who is said to have had love affair with the Abbess, but at any rate played a prominent rôle in the salon of the gay lady, was by and by supplanted by La Barre and was no longer invited to the parties of the Abbess. When he bitterly complained of this to La Barre, the latter insulted him in the open street. The injury to the crucifix furnished a good opportunity for him to take revenge on the Chevalier."

Belleval went about everywhere, questioning servants and common people mostly to learn discreditable things about La Barre, and as he reminded everybody that it was a sacred public duty to tell whatever one suspected, as the monitory demanded, he soon found that La Barre's name was connected with the irreverence that had been shown to the procession on Corpus Christi Day.

Moisnel, only sixteen or seventeen years old, was suspected of having been with La Barre and d'Etallonde when they passed the procession; he, too, had not kneeled, but he had carried his hat under his arm. The only thing he confessed at the outset about his companions was their indifference toward the holy procession.

At the second hearing the boy had been so frightened by his stay in jail and the possibility of his being executed that he mixed everything up and implicated himself and his companions in the greatest detail. For in the meantime Belleval, who was his guardian, had gained admission to the prison, reproached him for his previous reserve, and incited him to inform against La Barre.

Now Moisnel very much repented his transgression; he had always been very religious. He accused La Barre of having spit at pictures of the Saints, charged La Barre and d'Etallonde with having sung a certain obscene song called *La Madeleine,* and admitted that he himself had joined in the singing of similar songs, whose stanzas he even recited from memory for the court record.

He confessed that La Barre had loaned him Voltaire's *Lettres Philosophiques* as well as the poem *Epître à Uranie.* About d'Etallonde, he stated that he had seen him striking the crucifix on the bridge with his cane; it was also he who had sullied the cross in the cemetery. Moisnel begged forgiveness for having failed to confess all this at the first hearing. Meanwhile, two more young men whom Moisnel had accused of having sung obscene songs, had saved themselves by fleeing.

3

It would be painful to mention all the youthful frivolities of word and deed with which La Barre was charged by a whole mob of witnesses, and to which he finally succumbed. They concern ugly phrases about sacred matters.

La Barre admitted that he and d'Etallonde had passed the procession with their hats on. But in this they had no intention of committing any blasphemy; they had merely been anxious not to offend the Abbess by being late to dinner. When he was told that it would not have taken much time to take off his hat and kneel, he admitted that perhaps he had not acted properly.

That he had spoken ill of the holy Virgin, La Barre admitted was possible; but he must have been drunk. The irreverent words he was charged with using might perhaps be from *La Pucelle* and *Epître à Uranie,* which were ascribed to Monsieur de Voltaire. He admitted having sung at a carousal the obscene songs mentioned by Moisnel; he also confessed that he had recited Piron's *Ode à Priape,* and that he had knelt ceremoniously before several frivolous and godless books on his bookshelf, saying that this should be done on passing the tabernacle. This, however, had been done in jest. He stoutly denied having had any part in the sullying of the cross in the cemetery or the defacing of the crucifix. After having declared at first that he knew nothing about who the real perpetrator was, he confessed that d'Etallonde had told him one day when he had called on him to borrow his hunting pistol, that he had struck the crucifix several times with his scabbard.

But his library proved to be his undoing, for in France at that time, people were punished for the books they possessed, on unfair assumption that a man's books betrayed the exact way of thinking of their owner. Now it was revealed that La Barre had possessed books which either ignored or attacked the Church: Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique,* Helvetius' *De l'Esprit* and several others, as well as various of the frivolous books of that time, such as *Thérèse Philosophe, Le Portier des Chartreux, La Religieuse en Chemise,* etc., which according to a modern conception was not only no mortal sin but was no business of the state's whatsoever. His very sensible relative, Madame de Brou, realized into what great danger these books could bring her darling, and had ordered that they should be burned, immediately after his arrest; but a monk by the name of Schmid was mischievous enough not to carry out the order. He saved out various frivolous novels as *Le Sultan*

Misopouf et la Princesse Grisemine, Le Cousin de Mahomet, etc., and also Voltaire's *Le Portatif.*

Actually La Barre did not touch any crucifix, and there is nothing in any part of the *Dictionnaire* which might have incited him to do so. Thus it is plain that the judges had not read the work. Otherwise they would know in what tone it speaks of Jesus.

The next sensation of the trial was when, toward the end of the inquiry, the poor boy Moisnel took back all his accusations and denunciations, and declared that he had given this evidence under the pressure of a moral suasion used upon him by the court (that is Belleval).

4

The sentence of February 28, 1766, was that d'Etallonde was guilty *in contumaciam* of "having passed in a contemptuous way, at a distance of twenty-five feet, with covered head, and without kneeling, a procession which carried the holiest sacrament; and furthermore that he had tried to buy, from a certain Beauvarlet, a crucifix of plaster, in order that he might break it to pieces and step on it with his feet; and further that he had committed shocking blasphemies and sung two disgraceful songs which mock at God, the Holy Virgin and certain Saints; and finally that he had struck the crucifix erected on the Pont-Neuf." As a penalty for all this he was sentenced to do public penance before the main portal of St. Wulfram's church. Around his neck he should wear the inscription: "Damned and despised Blasphemer and violator." Thereafter his tongue should be torn out, his hand cut off, and he should be burned alive. His ashes were to be strewn to the four winds, and all his goods confiscated.

As he had fled, all this should be done with an effigy of him.

La Barre was declared to have been found guilty of having passed, with studied and deliberate contempt, with covered head and without kneeling, a procession which carried the holiest sacrament; besides which he had most shockingly taken in vain the name of God, sneered at the Holy Communion, the Holy Virgin, religion, the commandments of God and of the church; further, he had sung the two blasphemous songs mentioned in the documents, and by his own confession had worshiped the foul and infamous books on his bookshelf, even prayed to them while kneeling, and had made the sign of the cross while uttering obscenities.

Therefore he, too, must do public penance before the main portal of the church; then his tongue was to be torn out and he was to be beheaded in the market place. His head and body were to be thrown on a pyre and burned to ashes. Before the execution, he was to undergo the ordinary and extraordinary torture, so that the truth might be had out of him. His belongings were to be confiscated. The *Dictionnaire Philosophique* found in his room was to be thrown on the same pyre on which the body was burned.

In the Parliament of Paris, before which the case had to come next, La Barre had a kinsman, the President d'Ormesson. He had read the documents of the trial and remarked that the confirmation of the sentence was impossible; the lawyers should simply refrain from filing petitions for the defendant; for this would only give rise to gossip and discussion; the matter had to be disposed of very quietly.

It seems that d'Ormesson was a scoundrel. Under ecclesiastical influence he succeeded in preventing all steps in favor of La Barre. The affair proceeded in all secrecy, and the public which might perhaps have expressed, by some agitation, its anger at the senselessness of the trial, remained silent. The assessor, Pelliot, however, moved for dismissal—because of the youth of the defendant and the "circumstances of the case."

But then the Councillor of the Parliament, Pasquier, got up and demanded the confirmation of the verdict of Abbeville. It was imperative, he said, to put some stop to the increasingly bold godlessness which was proceeding from the more recent philosophy. It was the fault of a man who was recognized leader of the *philosophes* and consequently the real perpetrator of the sacrilege committed in Abbeville, and this man's name was Voltaire. Pasquier implored the Parliament to set an example.

He said: the high assemblage should do this in its own interest; for the Parliament had recently shown its hostility toward the Jesuits and the higher clergy who were connected with them, and hence it ought to seize this opportunity to show its zeal for religion.

The orator was effective, and his eloquence changed the votes of a considerable number of members. The Attorney-General Guillaume Joly de Fleury talked in vain against the confirmation of the barbaric sentence. On June 4, 1766, it was confirmed by fifteen against ten votes. As the signing of the sentence was delayed for six days, it would seem as though a Royal pardon was expected. The pious Louis, however, had no intention of letting the heavenly powers go unavenged.

5

La Barre was taken in a mail coach from Paris to Abbeville to be mutilated and executed. A roundabout was taken, as they were on the lookout for interference, and the coach was driven slowly in order to give the courier who perhaps was bringing the reprieve, a chance to overtake the coach. But there was no interference, nor was there any reprieve.

The nineteen-year-old youth died like a hero and kept his courage and dignity to the last. As his confessor he was given a Dominican monk whom he had often met at the abbey of Madame de Brou. Before he was called to the torture and execution, La Barre asked him to sit with him at the table, eat his half chicken and drank his bottle of wine. "Now we must drink coffee," he said calmly to Father Bosquier, "which will not keep me from getting to sleep."

On his last walk, to the place of execution, he was hurt by the fact that in the immense crowd which had come to enjoy the spectacle, he recognized many acquaintances, with a look of lustful anticipation in their eyes. He said: "The worst part about this day for me is that I can see people in the windows whom I believed to be my friends."

When he was led before the portal of the St. Wulfram's, he refused most decidedly to do the public penance, and it was found necessary to let another go through the ceremony for him. At this point the executioner's henchmen were supposed to tear out his tongue. But he threatened to resist so desperately that they were content to make a pretense of having torn it out. With the same firm resolute bearing he walked to the scaffold. When he ascended the steps, he lost one of his slippers. In spite of the fetters that held his arms and legs, he descended again and put it back on his foot. When he arrived at the scaffold he said: "I would never have believed that the life of a young nobleman would be taken for such trumperies."

Five executioners from five different cities had been summoned. One of them approached him to cut his hair. "What for?" said La Barre, "do they want to make me a choir-boy?"

When he saw the sword of the executioner, by which his head was to fall, he said: "Is your weapon a good one? Was it you who cut off the head of Count de Lally?"—"Yes, Monsieur!"—"But you missed him!"—"He held himself badly. Assume a correct position and I shall not miss you."—"Don't worry, I shall keep still and not be childish."

He had already borne the ordinary and extraordinary torture, and had stubbornly denied what it was especially wanted that he should confess, namely, his complicity in the defacing of the crucifix on the bridge. He remained firm to the last moment, tied the bandage over the eyes for himself, and lay in such a position as to make easy the work of the executioner. When the executioner cut off the head he was rewarded by general applause from the crowd and from all the windows.

The body, together with Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique Portatif,* was burned to ashes and strewn to the winds.

After La Barre's execution, the other defendants, whose sentence had merely been suspended, were in the greatest danger. But as the trial had been illegal in many points, the lawyer Linguet got out a petition on their behalf, and seven other prominent lawyers signed the document with him. This document asserted that (1) neither Duval de Soicourt nor Broutel should have been permitted to act as judges, (2) that the warrant of October 8, 1765, was illegal, and (3) that, as Moisnel had retracted his confession, there was no proof of the defendant's guilt.—When the Parliament of Paris threatened to take action against the eight lawyers and upbraided them severely, the entire legal profession lined up with their eight colleagues and threatened to resign from the bar. Frightened, the Parliament refrained from its intention. But Linguet's petition made no impression upon the public. For only a few copies had got into circulation before the Parliament bought up the entire edition and suppressed it. This is why the trial of La Barre attracted scarcely any attention in Paris, but in Abbeville, after reading the petition of Linguet, it was found best to dismiss Moisnel and the others who had sung obscene songs.

6

La Barre's execution threw Voltaire into the greatest excitement. On July 12 he wrote to d'Argental in such a way that the censor would not understand him; "My heart is torn; I have no use for a Felix who selects the most refined and inhuman tortures for the execution of a Polyeucte and Nearch (Corneille's *Polyeucte*). . . . There are play-goers who positively cannot bear such plays."

It struck Voltaire that he had been burned in effigy on the pyre which had consumed the body of poor La Barre. There was no telling what might happen to him if the Parliament should get him in its clutches. What a coup it would be if he could be arrested and a trial for blasphemy or the like could be instituted against him! What a triumph it would be for the Parliament to get hold of the very fountain-head of freethinking and to give it a death-blow in his person.

He had taken refuge at the baths near Rolle, in Switzerland; he always felt uneasy on French soil and he was seriously thinking not only of leaving France himself, but also of persuading the most prominent men of the philosophical party to do the same. He wanted to induce d'Alembert, Diderot, Holbach and Damilaville, and he turned to his former protector Frederick the Great for a refuge. The latter answered in July: "I am astonished to see from your letter that you are thinking of choosing another place of retirement than Switzerland, and that you are considering the region near Cleve. This asylum is always open for you. How could I refuse this to a man who contributes so much to the honor of literature, his country, the human race, his century! You can travel without exertion from Switzerland to Cleve; if you go abroad in Basle you can make the journey in two weeks without leaving your bed."

D'Alembert, who had kept Voltaire informed about the whole trial and who had told him that even the Papal Nutius was aroused by the barbaric sentence which would be inconceivable even to the Inquisition in Rome, had also written that he did not want to think about the whole matter any more.

But before he received this letter Voltaire had written to d'Alembert: "I cannot understand how thinking individuals can live in a country which is inhabited by monkeys which so often turn into tigers. I, for my part, am ashamed to live even on the border. Truly the moment has now come to break one's fetters, and to carry the impression of the horror with which one is filled to another place . . . there is no more time for jesting; jokes do not go with murderous deeds. . . . Is it the home of philosophy and of pleasure? It is the land of the massacre of St. Bartholomew!"

Frederick who had been called Luc for so long a time in Voltaire's correspondence now once more becomes brother Frederick. His letter of August 7 and September 13 are worth reading. He envies his nephew, the Duke of Brunswig, who had called upon Voltaire in Ferney and had heard him talk. He discusses the plan of a philosopher's colony in Cleve. They shall be welcome, but they must not expect to find woods, for these were cut and burned by their country-men, the French. And they must be peaceful and tolerant, not hurt the faith of the natives, as they, too, wish to enjoy full freedom. "The average man does not deserve to be enlightened. . . . If the philosophers were to form a government, the people would after a hundred and fifty years forge some new superstition, and would either pray to little idols or to the graves in which the great men are buried, or invoke the sun or commit some similar nonsense. Superstition is a weakness of the human mind, which is inseparably tied up with it; it has always existed and will always exist." The penalties in Abbeville had been barbaric; Frederick would make the penalty fit the crime. If one were to deface a statue he would sentence him to restore or replace it. If a man were convicted of reading Voltaire's works, he should be sentenced to study the *Summa Theologica* (eight volumes) of St. Thomas Aquinas. The frivolous sinner would thus probably be punished more severely than La Barre had been; for tediousness lasts a century, death only a moment.

Voltaire's plan was not successful. D'Alembert was not willing to leave Paris, and in vain did Voltaire send similar suggestions to Diderot.

But Diderot had just as little desire to leave Paris as d'Alembert and all the others whom Voltaire approached. Of course, they were not exposed to the vengeance of the opposing party as he was, but that was not the main cause.

Voltaire's nature was peculiar. He was now wholly the soldier, and the site of his camp must depend entirely upon the most favorable strategic conditions.

There is something sublime about the way in which, without regard to his feat of exposing himself to arrest, he gives his whole soul to his great aim, the spiritual emancipation of the human race. It is sad to note how, from the moment he lost the "respectable Emily" he became indifferent to women, social intercourse with his friends, his surroundings, even the colony he had founded and developed. He could love, no matter where it might be. Nothing tied him.

He loved no more women, and was loved by none; living always near Geneva, he had grown accustomed to having all his friends in Paris, at such a distance that it was a greater journey than it is now from Geneva to New York. He had to become accustomed to doing without Paris, without France, bitter as it must have been. Where he himself was, there Paris was; there was France.

He now was a center in himself. The others had to stay in Paris, the intellectual center. He himself was not tied by any woman on earth. But how could have Diderot done without Sophie Volland, the joy of his life, whom he loved, and who loved him; and how could have d'Alembert done without Julie de Lespinasse, whom he loved and who he naïvely imagined loved him! As d'Alembert had refused all of the great Frederick's entreaties to come to him and conduct his Academy, he refused now the invitation of Catherine II to come to Petersburg to tutor the future Paul I, with a yearly income of sixty thousand francs.

These men neither could tear nor wished to tear themselves away from that Paris from which Voltaire was barred. They therefore had to listen to bitter words from Voltaire. "Certain monsters," he says, "are allowed to go on living for the sole reason that the Hercules who could exterminate them are unwilling to tear themselves away from their little lady-friends."

7

In his tribute to Voltaire, Frederick the Great says: "He would have awakened the Chevalier de La Barre from the dead, had he possessed the gift of performing miracles. How splendid it is that a philosopher makes his voice heard from his refuge, and that the human race, whose spokesman he is, then forces the judges to revise an unjust sentence. If nothing else spoke in favor of Monsieur de Voltaire, this alone would be enough to earn him a place among the benefactors of the human race."

The blatant injustice of La Barre's sentence could not fail to strike anyone who could boast a modicum of common sense. For La Barre had really committed no crime. Far worse things than he had uttered had gone entirely unpunished in France. The Abbé le Camus had once in his youth scoffed at the holy communion and had fed the holy wafer to a pig. For this he had simply been expelled from France and this ban did not prevent him later from becoming a Cardinal and posing as a very pious man. In every garrison in France the young officers had for a hundred years sung the same coarse songs about Mary Magdalene, the Virgin Mary, and Saints of both sexes, and nobody ever thought of punishing them for it.

In the winter of 1767-68 Pasquier again bellowed to the Parliament that Voltaire's attacks on religion could not be tolerated any longer, and that it was his firm intention to put Voltaire into prison as soon as a copy of the manuscript *Le Diner du comte de Boulainvilliers,* which was scarcely in circulation, should fall into his hands. These words bespoke the humor of the stupid population of Paris, and Voltaire knew that he had to be on his guard for the rest of his days.

The short writing *Le Diner du comte de Boulainvilliers* (1767) is one of Voltaire's best.

This dialogue gives the entire Voltairian criticism of the Bible in a nutshell. It is a sharply effective, very concise, clear and also witty little book.

Meanwhile he had published a short, conclusive sketch entitled *Relation de la mort du Chevalier de La Barre.* This bore the date of July 15, 1766, though it was actually written in 1768. It was put out under the name of M. Cas.... *advocat au conseil du Roi.* The dedication was to the great Italian criminologist, Marchese de Beccaria, whose famous book the vacillating Muyart de Vouglans had tried to refute, at the same time that he signed the petition protesting against the sentence of the Chevalier de La Barre. Voltaire introduces his work by stating two principles which throw a glaring light on the French sense of justice.

"First: When a nation is still so barbaric as to subject the indicted man to torture, e.g., to make them suffer death not once but a thousand times, without learning whether he is guilty or innocent, it is at least clear that this excess of fury is not necessary in the case of a defendant who confesses his guilt.

"Second: It is as foolish as it is cruel to punish harmless transgressions against the prevailing customs, habits and opinions of the country, in the same way in which parricides and poisoners are punished."

And after he has set forth the whole case, Voltaire concludes:

"Several judges made the statement that under the existing circumstances religion needed this deterring example. They are very wrong. Nothing could possibly do religion more harm. Ghosts are not laid in this way; they are irritated and aroused. Unfortunately, I have heard various people say that they could not help despising a sect which sustains itself with the aid of hangmen.

"Thus a few boys, who had sung satirical songs, were threatened with the same punishment as parricides and poisoners. And the rank, stupid injustice of this very case has made people utter a hundred thousand religious mockeries. They cannot believe how contemptible our Roman Catholic Church is made to appear in the eyes of the world by this one incident. And then the judges say that politics forced them to act as they did. What beastly and barbaric politics! What a shocking crime against justice to inflict a sentence for political reasons, especially a death sentence, and above all a sentence to a death like that!"

8

As Voltaire had feared, the sentencing and execution of La Barre caused another postponement of the Sirven case.

We have seen how Elie de Beaumont put it off. Now, on the pretext that the horrors of fanaticism had paralyzed his hand, he was even more inactive. Every wish Beaumont expressed (that the report of the case would be submitted to Chardon, that Sirven's lawyer before the *Conseil* should not be Mariette but Cassen, etc.) was fulfilled by Voltaire through his influence with the Duke de Choiseul. But it was of no avail. Elie de Beaumont did not move, and thus compromised not only his client but also Voltaire, who in the summer of 1766 had in his *Avis au public sur les parricides imputés aux Calas et Sirven,* which he had sent to various princes, referred again and again to Elie de Beaumont's petition as if this were on the point of being published. As the petition did not appear, Sirven's benefactors might suspect that he had tried to deceive them.

On top of all this, Voltaire's *Avis* became known among lawyers in Paris whose caution caused them horrible anxiety about Voltaire's violent language, and who were afraid of being regarded as conspirators with him.

In it Voltaire spoke of the madness which was drenching the globe with blood, of the courts of Christianity which had for fifteen hundred years polluted themselves with judiciary murder, out of pure superstition, and of the horrible notion that one man had a right to force other people to think as he himself thought, "But," he exclaimed, "could anything be more insane than the belief that people can be converted by defaming them, persecuting them, dragging them to the galleys, and venting one's wrath upon them with scaffold, wheel, and stake?"

The lawyers had come to him with the reservation that in any case their opinion was to be submitted to the *Conseil alone,* not to the public. But Voltaire was becoming more and more convinced that an appeal to public opinion was the only thing that could help.

Elie de Beaumont, who had promised to finish his contribution within fourteen days, now had not finished it after one and a half years. The reason for this was that he was involved in a lawsuit which occupied him entirely.

The defender of Calas and Sirven had not scrupled to take advantage of the shocking injustice of the

French laws against Protestants to line his own pockets. His wife, though Catholic herself, was descended from a Protestant family; her great-uncle when he fled to England, had sold his estate for a small sum. Now the property was very valuable. According to the law which at that time was designed to check the emigration of Protestants, the sale was invalid. So now Beaumont, in the name of his wife, demanded the return of the estate without any compensation to the present proprietor.

This lawsuit had a double unfortunate effect: All Protestants were aroused against Beaumont, and it furnished the Catholics the chance to point out how little right the official defender of Calas had to complain of intolerance toward the Protestants, as he was as intolerant as any other.

Voltaire could not say a word against Elie de Beaumont. He continued to treat him very attentively and as a reward, he, in February, 1767, received the long-awaited memorandum. La Harpe read it aloud to him at once, and he greeted it with enthusiasm and praise of Beaumont.

But afterward, on reading Damilaville's accompanying letter, it was discovered that the work was not by Beaumont at all but by Damilaville, who had elaborated it for his own pleasure.

Finally in March Voltaire came into possession of the real petition, which was signed by eighteen lawyers of Paris. They were unanimous in feeling that this was a case in which, according to the order of 1737, it was the duty of the Crown to make use of its prerogative of demanding an appeal against a judgment in default.

But just when the battle seemed to be won, something very depressing happened. The *Conseil* feared the excitement which would follow in all the Parliaments if the Sirven case were taken out of the hands of the Parliament of Toulouse and given to a court appointed by the *Conseil.* So it rejected the petition. Even the Duke of Choiseul voted against it. The work of five years was lost for Voltaire.

On February 8, 1778, he wrote to Damilaville: "The misfortune of the Sirven family is also my misfortune. I admit, of course, that formal considerations can sometimes outweigh material ones; but if there is a case, in which formality should be subordinate, it is that in which human lives are at stake." Sirven could not possibly go before the Parliament of Toulouse; there he would surely be broken upon the wheel.

9

There was nothing to do but to bring the poor man back to Switzerland; and now several years pass during which time the name Sirven disappears from Voltaire's correspondence. But only one who knew him very little would think that with a will such as his, he had surrendered to fanaticism.

For a while he believed that he had found the solution: This was to have a relative of the deceased Madame Sirven in Languedoc file a petition that she be declared innocent. If this should succeed, Sirven's innocence would automatically be established without the necessity of his leaving Switzerland.

But Voltaire soon became convinced that the court would answer this petition by inquiring why the surviving relatives did not dare to appear.

There was nothing to do but to send Sirven to Languedoc. This was made possible by the change that had taken place in public opinion there. Among Voltaire's correspondents the one who was especially ardent in his assurances of the changes that had taken place was the Abbé Audra, Baron de Saint-Juste, a very good authority on the conditions in Toulouse. Voltaire, however, made the condition that a member of the Parliament of Toulouse be found, who would declare himself willing to protect Sirven, "so he might visit, without endangering his life, the place where Calas had found his death."

To make doubly sure, Voltaire also approached the Marquis de Garduch, asking that he, too, should be on the look-out for such a member of the Parliament. And these two succeeded in finding a member of the Parliament who solemnly promised to protect the Sirvens.

After Voltaire had so carefully paved the way, in March, 1769, Sirven traveled to Toulouse, while his daughters remained in Switzerland. He had to take the step now, for, on September 11, 1769, it would be five years since the sentence in default had been executed upon the dummy that represented him, and after that time the verdict would be irrevocable, the appeal invalid.

At first Sirven traveled about in southern France, gathering material for his defense. The most valuable result of these efforts was the report from the medical faculty in Montpellier, charging the court physicians with criminal ignorance. Voltaire wrote to Professor le Roi (August 16, 1769):

"It is horrible to think that in France the life and honor of a father of a family are at the mercy of an ignorant surgeon and an idiotic judge."

At the end of August Sirven reported at the prison in Mazamet. There he was treated so harshly that Voltaire was forced to file a violent protest with the attorney-general in Toulouse. It seemed a favorable omen that Landes was this time declared disqualified and was replaced by another judge, Labrugnière, who was to render a new decision together with the same two colleagues who had imposed the sentence in 1764.

On September 2 Sirven was questioned for the first time and was confronted with forty-four witnesses. The prosecutor made use of his right to hear only the witnesses against Sirven.

Trinquier did not hesitate to read the evidence given by those witnesses who were now dead and consequently beyond the reach of cross-questioning by Sirven's counsel. In spite of all this the severely tried man, in whose mental abilities Voltaire had shown too little confidence, was able to advance ample proof of his innocence. Although the hearings lasted sixteen days, Sirven's caution and ready wit never faltered. He entered into debates with every one of the witnesses, and pointed out atrocious contradictions in the evidence given. Especially did he finish off the physician Gallet Duplessis, for whom the opinions of the professors of medicine were annihilating.

All this did not prevent the prosecutor from moving, on November 10, 1769, that Sirven be sentenced for the murder of his daughter. The court decided that the charge against Sirven should be dismissed; he was discharged from prison and his confiscated fortune released.

XII

CATHERINE II

1

For several years Russia had tried to get into closer touch with Voltaire. We have seen that for a long time he was fascinated by Peter the Great; we also have seen how the attention he devoted to Peter caused ill humor in Frederick; for, the latter believed that Prussia was more deserving than Russia to have its greatness immortalized by the pen which at that time had the power of giving or withholding fame to an empire.

Elizabeth, the daughter of Peter the Great, born before Peter's marriage to Catherine, was a weak woman who allowed herself three times to be passed over for the succession to the throne; nevertheless, in 1741, by a conspiracy and a revolution of the troops in the palace, she was proclaimed Empress. She was coarse and erotic, and greedy for pleasure, but not devoid of intellect and wit, and therefore she made advances to Voltaire. She sent him her portrait in a frame of large diamonds. Russia is revealed in the fact that the gift disappeared on the way. He consoled himself with having a kindred spirit in an Empress who lived two thousand miles away from him. This compensated him for the "clamor of the street gamins." He felt it a painful loss when Elizabeth died in 1762.

As a matter of fact he suffered no loss for a woman ascended the Russian throne who felt such a devotion to him as thirty-six years before Frederick the Great had felt. The friendship of Catherine II refreshed Voltaire's old age, as Frederick's friendship had been a satisfaction of his prime.

For the second time in Voltaire's life a sovereign, who was a genius, assumed the position of his pupil, and did everything to make him feel the gratitude which he knew his work deserved.

Catherine sought in Voltaire's writings the enlightenment and instruction for which her soul longed, but she had read him for almost seventeen years before she made a personal approach. Unquestionably she sought out Voltaire because she was aware of the unfavorable impression the revolution to which she owed her throne had created at many Courts. She did not like to have public opinion against her. She considered that all would be well if she could get on her side the man who was more the champion and protector of the wronged than any other in Europe. But not only this consideration of expediency, but also something far finer drew Catherine to Voltaire.

In October, 1763, she wrote him the first of her letters, as a reply to a letter he had written to Pictet:

"Today I have my first occasion to regret that I cannot write verses; so the best I can do is to answer yours in prose; but I can assure you that, since 1746, when I became mistress of my own time, I have the strongest obligations toward you. Before that time I read novels only; then by chance your works fell into my hands; and since then I have never stopped reading them, have not wished to have anything to do with books which were not written as well and from which the same profit could not be derived. But where shall they be found? I, therefore, returned to the man who was the first awakener of my spirit and who had given me my dearest enjoyment. In any case, Monsieur, one thing is certain, that if I have any knowledge, I owe it to this man alone. But since out of pure respect, he forbids himself to tell me that he kisses my picture, I must, out of pure decency, leave him in uncertainty about my enthusiasm for his works.[1] Just now I am reading his essay on world history! I would like to learn every page of it by heart, while I am waiting for the book on the works of the great Corneille, for which, I hope, a

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[1] From Voltaire's letter to Pictet, of September, 1765:

Your mother will send you news from Geneva. I, for my part, am so filled with respect for your sublime Empress that it makes me forget even your great republic. I have kissed her picture. But say nothing to her about that! It's disrespectful.

note of exchange has been sent to cover my subscription.
Katharina.

2

Peter III, whose name as the Duke of Holstein was Karl Peter Ulrich, a grandson of Peter the Great, was born in Kiel, 1728. When the male line of the Romanoffs had become extinct, he was called to Russia by the Empress Elizabeth and appointed Grand-Duke and successor to the throne, on November 18, 1742. Reluctantly he let himself be converted to the Greek Church, but remained a Lutheran in spirit. At almost the same time (on November 4, 1742) the Swedish peers had elected him King, but he had not accepted the election. On September 1, 1745, he was married to the Princess Sophie Auguste of Anhalt-Zerbst.

This Peter was a brute in every respect, a drunkard from the time he was ten years old. Because he was altogether without education, it was imagined that the Grand-Marshal Brummer, a Swede, deliberately did his best to spoil his soul and mind, in anger that the Prince was not destined for the Swedish but for the Russian throne. The Marshal cannot be held responsible for the boy's vices. It cost him the greatest efforts to stop the boy from always getting drunk at the table.

Peter really thought far more of his little duchy of Holstein than of the Russian empire. He soon armed himself against Denmark to press the claims of the House of Holstein upon Schleswig. He was even thinking of taking the command of his Russian army for that purpose, when a conspiracy in Petersburg snatched power from his hands.

Catherine, whose original name was Sophie Auguste, was born in Stettin in May, 1728, the daughter of Prince Christian August of Anhalt-Zerbst, who was a Prussian general and Governor of Stettin. At the recommendation of Frederick the Great she was chosen by Elizabeth to be the wife of Peter.

When, in February, 1744, she came with her mother to Moscow, she found her fiancé a very childish boy in spite of his sixteen years. In his rooms he did nothing but make his two lackeys march up and down. He ranked them, promoted and degraded them, just as he pleased.

As soon as Catherine, then fourteen years old, arrived, she took lessons in the Greek religion and in Russian; for, she was well aware that it was of the greatest importance to give the people the feeling that she was thorough Russian in language and feeling. She studied Russian so diligently that whenever she could not sleep at night, she sat up in bed and learned by heart the books which her tutor had given her. She had scarcely awakened in the morning when she sat in her nightgown and studied Russian. In doing this, she contracted pneumonia, and almost died.

She, who knew the value of keeping silence, was amazed to hear how her fiancé prated, without the slightest trace of self-restraint. He told her that, since they were cousins, he could confide in her. He was in love with one of the ladies of the Queen, who had had to leave the Court because her mother had been sent to Siberia. He would have preferred to marry this girl, but had consented to marry Catherine.

With her superior mind and self-restraint, she did not have to listen to more than one such remark to judge the mentality of her future spouse. But that was not all. For years this uncouth boy confided to the young girl who became his wife, but whom he scarcely wanted to touch, all the ridiculous adventures he was having with women who often were so ugly and vulgar that nobody else would look at them, and who told the whole world that he was repulsive, as did also all the pretty women with whom he came in contact as the successor to the throne and as czar.

Catherine had to cope with many difficulties. Her own mother committed one folly after another, and was continually on the point of arousing the Empress against the wife of the Heir Apparent; Catherine knew that, if there was anybody who had to be placated in order not to be sent back to Stettin or Anhalt, it was the Empress, who was twenty years her senior and who had to be treated with a devotion and caution which excluded every thought of rivalry. Besides she knew that she had to be courteous and polite to everybody at Court.

As she had an unquenchable good humor, she won more and more hearts.

3

The foundation of her literary education was laid by a Swedish nobleman, Count Gyllembourg. He gave her Plutarch, Cicero, Montesquieu to read, but tried especially to give the young girl strength of mind and firmness of character. She resolved to follow his advice. Her fiancé had just then told her that the distance between his castle and hers was too great as to permit him to visit her more than rarely. She was too proud to complain of this.

She was married to Peter in 1745 and was now the Grand Duchess. Her mother departed for home; her father died, and when she wept violently and long for him, the Empress commanded her to stop sniveling. There was, she said, no reason to mourn for the loss of a father who had not been a king.

Catherine's appearance was charming. She was dark, with blue eyes. Many men paid her homage. As soon as it seemed that she were interested Bishop Theodorski was sent out to question her, and others to spy on her. But nothing could be discovered. Her passion was still intellectual. She read serious books, Bayle's *Dictionnaire,* Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des Lois,* and especially the *Annals* of Tacitus, which made a great impression upon her, and taught her to look for the reasons lying behind events. But more than all she read Voltaire, and whatever else she read she regarded with his eyes.

In the meantime the Grand Duke played with his lackeys, drilled them, changed his uniform twenty times a day, trained a brace of dogs, sent grenadier uniforms to his mistresses as gifts: bear skin caps and epaulettes.

Catherine's beauty came into its glory when she rode on horseback or when she was at a ball. She was a most expert rider, and she had more endurance than any other lady at the balls. She dressed as simply and unostentatiously as possible, in order not to displease the Empress. Elizabeth had good-looking legs, and she was proud of them, so in order to show them as much as she could she liked to order masquerades to which the men came dressed as women, the ladies in men's attire. Catherine says in her memoirs:

"She was a treat in men's clothing. One could not tear one's eyes away from her. One night I watched her dance a minuet. When it was over she came to me. I took the liberty of telling her that it was really lucky for the ladies that she was not a man, and that her portrait alone might cause many ladies to lose their heads. She took my compliment graciously and answered in the same tone that, if I were a man, she would award me the apple. I bent down to kiss her hand for such an unexpected courtesy. Thereafter she kissed me, and the whole company tried to find out what had gone on between us."

At this scene one recalls that Elizabeth's celebrated reader, the Chevalier d'Eon de Beaumont was dressed as a woman.

Catherine was clever enough in her behavior to overcome some of the prejudices Elizabeth had against her. One senses that in her innermost heart she understood Elizabeth, that she has penetrated the Empress's secret sexual inclinations, when she relates in another place that although she continued to be dressed as simply as possible at the balls, at masquerades, on the contrary, she was allowed to wear the most gorgeous men's costumes, chosen tastefully and beautifully sewn, embroidered and trimmed with lace. "This pleased the Empress. I do not know exactly why."

During seventeen years Catherine was Grand Duchess, her relations with her husband fall into two periods. In the first, he made her his confidant and asked her advice, especially in all political matters; in the second he became domineering and hostile. In one respect only he remained always the same, his imbecility.

Catherine tells how one day she heard such horrible cries coming from his quarters that she opened the door:

"I saw him holding one of his dogs up in the air by its collar, while a Kalmuck boy who was with him held it by its tail, it was a poor little English dog, and with the heavy butt of his whip the Grand Duke struck the dog with all his strength. I tried to intercede for the poor beast; but after that he only doubled his strokes. As I could not stand this cruel spectacle, I retired to my rooms with tears in my eyes. But instead of moving the Grand Duke to pity, tears only made him more bitter. Pity was for him a painful emotion, which his nature could not endure."

Four years later when Peter was twenty-five years, she frequently had to go to his room to make peace there. He liked to sit and drink with his attendants, and then suddenly start up and strike them with a cane or with the flat of a sword. Sometimes this made them so furious that he had to run to her to quiet them. One day under these circumstances she was surprised to see a rat, which her husband had hung on an improvised gallows.

"He told me that this rat had committed a crime which, according to martial law, deserved the most stringent death penalty. It had climbed over the ramparts of a paper fort, which stood on a table, and had eaten two plaster sentries which were stationed on one of the towers. He had the criminal sentenced according to martial law. His dog had caught the rat and the latter was promptly hanged, and would hang there for three days as a deterring example for the public. I could not help laughing at this insanity. But this displeased him very much as he took the matter seriously. I entrenched myself behind my female ignorance of the military code. He, however, remained hurt at my laughter. At least it could be said in the rat's defense that he had been sentenced unheard, without any legal process."

As long as possible Catherine tried to keep others from learning of Peter's fits of insanity and brutality. He let her rule his beloved Holstein for him, as he had no idea of politics. But this did not last long. He was almost continually drunk, always surrounded by flatterers who persuaded him that he was a great commander. Peter had an unbounded admiration for Frederick the Great, not an admiration for his genius, but for his uniforms and parades. This admiration was later of importance. Peter the Third's only real usefulness in this world was when he got Frederick the Great out of the desperate situation in which he was in 1761, when he himself no longer saw a way out. Just then Elizabeth died, and Peter promptly made peace and an alliance with his ideal. Catherine writes:

"Since the year 1755 his chief pastime was to set up a vast number of little dolls, soldiers of wood, zinc, tinder, and wax, which he arranged in order on narrow tables taking up the space of the whole room. He had narrow brass bands nailed to the sides of these tables, and connected by wires, and when he pulled these the brass bands sounded, he said, like rolling gunfire. He was meticulous about celebrating the feasts of the Court by making these troops fire volleys. Besides a daily inspection parade was held; e.g., the dolls which had to go on watch were taken from every table. The Grand Duke attended the inspection in dress uniform, with high boots, spurs and cuirass and baldrick. Those of his servants who were admitted to this lovely drill were dressed in the same way."

4

In this eternal drunkenness he frequently entered the Grand Duchess's bedroom and drew his sword, now to threaten her, then again to defend her against imaginary foes. She was not exactly frightened, but asked him to sleep off his intoxication. He had affairs openly with ladies of the Court, and finally came altogether under the domination of one of them, Elizabeth Woronzoff by name, and promised her that he would get a divorce from Catherine as soon as he should become Czar.

The Empress ordered that an heir to the throne should be produced. But, due to the atmosphere of wine and tobacco in which he lived, and perhaps also to his poor digestion, any close physical contact with the Grand Duke was suffocatingly offensive. In her memoirs Catherine hints that, without Peter's help, but with the hearty co-operation of the young, handsome Soltykoff, the first man she fell in love with, she obeyed the order of the Empress and gave birth to Paul I. By a strange freak of nature, however, he did not resemble his handsome father, but Peter III, and became, like him, ugly, childish and grotesque. From now on Catherine changed her tactics. She openly showed her contempt of those who fought her and spied on her at Court, and her hearty friendship for those upon whom she could depend. She let it be known that no longer could she be slighted or insulted without somebody paying for it. At the same time she let loose her temper. No sooner had Soltykoff disappointed her by his bad behavior than Stanislaw Paniatowski took his place. Catherine gave birth to a daughter.

As she now fully understood the moodiness of the Grand Duke, his weaknesses and his violence, she was convinced of the necessity of beginning to form a party for herself with a view to the future. The physical and mental qualities of her husband indicated that he would soon be a wreck. Should she perish with him if he refused to listen to reasonable advice, or should she pursue her own independent course? In reality there was no question in her mind about it. She had the ability, by her personal charm, to become the darling of the people, even more, to be the one by whom nearly the entire population would wish to be ruled.

Then suddenly, in 1762, Elizabeth died. Peter III followed her on the throne, and as Empress Catherine felt her existence stronger than ever before. The Czar had entirely broken with her. The haughtiness of his mistress knew no bounds. At this time the Empress was exposed to the danger that some day at one of his mad carousals the Czar might disown her and her son as heirs. Again and again he threatened to banish her from Russia or to put her into a convent.

Peter had been on the throne half a year when, on July 8, the revolution broke out. This had been secretly fomented by the brothers Orloff in the army, and by the Princess Daschkoff at Court. During the night of July 9 Catherine went with her lover, Gregor Orloff, with whom she lived faithfully for the next twelve years, from Peterhof to the capital, where she was proclaimed Empress. Peter, poor wretch, lost his courage, and did not dare take command of his army. He sent Catherine a letter the next day, in which he renounced the throne and promised to return to Germany.

Probably the promise of the half-imbecile was not considered dependable; for it could always be taken back as given under compulsion; so the resolute and relentless Alexis Orloff, brother of the handsome and good-natured Gregor, gave the order that he be made away with. A week after the revolution he was found strangled at his country estate, Ropschka, where he had been interned. The Empress was told nothing of this murder until it was accomplished. She certainly did not mourn this incident; but she knew that it would leave a stain on her name, which would be difficult to erase, but which it was absolutely essential to have removed. Although since ancient times the constitution of Russia had been autocratic, mitigated by assassination, it was nevertheless embarrassing to have to take the responsibility for this deed which was not her fault.

Certain as it is that she was the responsible leader of the palace revolution, it is equally certain that she was innocent in the murder. The passionate condemnations of her for this deed have their origin in the mania of ignorant people for condemning. Frederick the Great who knew about it, the Prince of Ligne who knew everything and everybody, the Princess Daschkoff who was one of the chief conspirators of the palace revolution, all testify separately that the plot to strangle Peter III had been kept from Catherine. The Princess had even seen the cynical letter (later published) from Alexis Orloff to the Empress, in which he informed her of the murder of her husband and implored her forgiveness.

She was horrified at the murder, and she burst into tears. But in her contempt for hypocrisy, she restrained her tears. She was too politic and too proud to punish the crime; she was aware that this would be regarded as a farce. She was content, for her own and for her son's sake, to keep Orloff's letter in safety, and to set to work on the problem of becoming the greatest ruler of Russia since Peter the Great. She succeeded. Diderot described her: "The soul of a Brutus in the pretty body of a Cleopatra." Brutus is by no means the right name. But she did have a heroic soul. The Prince of Ligne defined it as "imperturbable." She liked the word so much that after that she signed her letters to him "Votre imperturbable."

The connection between Catherine and Voltaire was brought about thus: The French ambassador in Petersburg, Monsieur de Breteuil—a nephew of Madame du Châtelet—wrote on September 13, 1762: "The Empress wished to know whether I was acquainted with Sieur de Voltaire, and she asked me to correct his opinion about the rôle the Princess Daschkoff played."

Catherine had in her entourage the Genevese Pictet whose name appears in a letter from Voltaire to Mademoiselle Cairon, dated September 19, 1760. He says that, if she really would do his house the honor of visiting him and playing in one of his dramas, he had an actor who was six feet, one inch tall. This man, whom Voltaire was wont to call his dear giant, was Pictet, who in the meantime had become Catherine's private secretary. On August 4, 1762, he, probably at the request of the Empress, wrote to the patriarch:

"I am convinced that everybody who knew the real character of Peter III, his way of acting and his plans for the future, will approve of the Russian nation for forcing such a man to abdicate in favor of the most dignified and greatest empress ever seen in this world. . . . You may rest assured that the Empress did not seek the throne, but yielded to a general demand from the people when she ascended it. . . . The revolution was brought on simply by the contrast between the characters of Peter III and Catherine. What should the Russian nation think when it saw Peter III? He had spent his youth with Court fools: in the first few weeks after his coronation he awakened a little hope in the breasts of his subjects—as long as he continued to go to the Empress for advice; but after that he surrendered entirely to excesses and to the most disgusting gluttony. What should the people think when they saw how their Emperor spent day and night at the table, and was drunk every time he appeared in public?

Voltaire apparently at first believed the Empress guilty, but he showed a certain indulgence. He wrote to the ambassador Schuwaloff with whom he was in communication in regard to his *History of Peter the Great:* "There is some talk of a violent colic which helped Peter to forget the trifling unpleasantness of having lost an empire of 2000 miles' circumference. Your Semiramis only lacks a Ninias to make the resemblance perfect. I must confess I'm afraid I am so far gone on the downward path that I cannot be as indignant over that as a good Christian should be. Much good can come from a little wickedness. Fate is like the Jesuits; it employs all means." As the text of the letter shows, Voltaire was inclined to believe the worst, but also to excuse the worst if it were true. He had a suspicion that Catherine's secretary was not writing without the request of the Empress, but he pretended that he did not suspect. He sent a polite but guarded answer. Pictet, not content with this reserved attitude on the part of the great man, wrote back:

"Monsieur, I received yesterday the letter which you did me the honor of sending, and I hasten to reply, although as yet I do not know on what day the courier for Monsieur de Breteuil is to leave. Will you permit me to scold you? I am very sorely tempted, but I hardly dare to take that liberty. I wrote you a long letter. Whatever I said, you must have been perfectly well aware that I had the letter read secretly in the highest quarters. An answer was awaited with impatience. This answer arrives; but it is so dry, so cold, so meager, that I have not been willing to show it. For almost six months I have not sent a letter to Geneva without annoying people to ask you to entrust me your new plays and whatever new things you have written, since I went to Russia. I do not know what expression to use to beg you to do me this kindness.

"When I tell you that my future depends upon your kindness, it does not overstate the case. They are so flattering here as to call me a writer, and the pleasant thing you wrote about me to Monsieur de Schuwaloff has helped to confirm the belief that you have a certain respect for my person and my abilities.

"From this it is concluded that it is not proper for you to refuse me a copy of your production, and Her Majesty, who knows by heart almost everything you published, never ceases to ask me to secure for her your new play and everything else you have written and are writing now, that has not been included in your collected works. You can be sure that nobody except Her Majesty shall see anything that should remain in confidence. She has permitted me to give you her word. She has also requested me to ask your permission for the performance of your new plays, when we get them, at Court. In speaking of performances at Court this does not mean by actors (there are none here this summer) but by the ladies and gentlemen of the Court. This winter we are studying *Zaïre, Alzire* and Genghis Khan.

5

Voltaire's cool attitude could not fail to be melted by such attention and enthusiasm. Had it only been for the sake of the good giant whose position in St. Petersburg depended upon Voltaire's courtesy, a polite response was absolutely inevitable. Unfortunately the first letters exchanged between him and the Empress have been lost. But we see that he continued for some time longer to write to Pictet, and that his letters to the secretary were seized upon by the Empress.

In the first of Catherine's letters that we possess, it is said: "I committed a mortal sin when I appropriated the first letter that you wrote to the giant about me. I left a whole batch of petitions on the shelf, and kept numerous people in suspense as to their fates, so desirous was I to read it. And I am not even remorseful about it."

In the letter she opened, which though not addressed to her was meant for her eyes, she found so much that flattered her that she asks Monsieur de Voltaire "very seriously" not to praise her before she has earned the praise.

Voltaire is inclined to believe only the best of her. But he has heard that there is discontent in Russia. He asks the Count d'Argental: "Is it true that in Russia the fire is glowing under the ashes? that there is a powerful faction in favor of Prince Ivan? that my dear Empress will be dethroned and that we are to have new material for tragedies?" Several weeks later (August 13, 1763) he writes to the Countess d'Argental: "I am afraid that my dear Empress will be killed." He could have spared himself this anxiety. Catherine was not the type to allow herself to be dethroned or assassinated. She could not be frightened; her will was very unlikely to let an enemy deliver the first blow. Ivan, who—judging by Catherine's manifesto—was only a wild beast, had scarcely time to raise the banner of revolt, before he was disposed of.

Voltaire was hurt by this, and he thought of adding an article against cruel deeds to the *Dictionnaire philosophique* Catherine had asked from him. But by and by he found himself respecting Catherine's imperturbable self-reliance, and he shared the opinion of d'Alembert, who wrote to him: "My good friend in Russia has just issued a long manifesto concerning the adventures of Prince Ivan; he was really, as she says, a wild beast. The proverb warns us: 'It is better to subdue the devil than to be subdued by him.' If Princes were adopting mottoes, as in the old times, it strikes me that this phrase would be appropriate to her. . . . I agree with you when you say that philosophy has no reason to boast of such pupils. But what will you have? One must love his friends with all their faults."

6

In 1765, Voltaire published *La Philosophie de l'histoire par feu l'Abbé Bazin* with the following dedication:

"To the right honorable and majestic Princess Catherine II, Empress of all the Russias, protectress of arts and sciences, who by her great gifts is able to judge the nations of the past, as she is worthy of ruling over her own. Most devotedly dedicated by the nephew of the author."

The Empress answered: "The Empress of Russia is very much obliged to the nephew of Abbé Bazin for dedicating to her the work of his uncle. . . . She has read this beautiful book with great joy, and did not find that she was superior to what she read, as she herself is a member of that poor human race which has such a strong bent for the strangest follies. Unfortunately she is convinced that the book will be the victim of this bent and that it will be publicly burned at Paris—which can only bring new glory to the book. As the nephew of the Abbé Bazin has kept deep silence about the place of his residence, this answer is addressed to Monsieur de Voltaire who is so famous as a protector and helper of young writers whose talent leads him to hope that at some time they will be useful to the human race. This famous writer is asked to forward these short lines to their destination, and should he by any chance not know this nephew of the Abbé Bazin, he will certainly excuse this step, in view of the splendid gifts of the young man."

For some time Catherine's letters pursue this little joke about the nephew of Abbé Bazin. When he has finally been located, the Empress sends him a little package to show her gratitude for the nice things he had said. The package was probably valuable enough, small though it was.

In May, 1767, Voltaire is so enthusiastic about his Catherine (he likes to call her disrespectfully *ma* Cateau) that he writes to his ostensible friend Madame du Deffand: "I am her champion and defend her to everybody. I know well that she is reproached with a trifle regarding her husband; but these are family matters, where I do not intrude; besides, it does no one any harm to have a mistake to live down; that induces all the stronger efforts to win back the public respect and admiration, and it is certain that her despicable husband would never have done such deeds as my Catherine does every day."

These words were provoking to moralists whose knowledge of the facts amounted to zero and whose conviction that they themselves were the most highly moral characters was unshakable. Of course, Madame du Deffand in anger at once informed her beloved Horace Walpole of Voltaire's frivolous opinion, an anger Walpole shared and expressed: "Voltaire is a puzzle to me, with his Catherine. A nice subject for levity, the murder of a husband and the theft of a crown! It is, he says, not a bad thing to have a crime to make good for. What does one do to atone for a murder? Perhaps by buying poets for a pension? Or by paying money to historians who have their price? And by supporting ridiculous philosophers at a distance of one thousand miles?"

When one reads such things one might believe that Catherine's guilt was proven, and that her virtues and abilities were limited to a few gifts to foreign writers.

The indefatigable Madame du Deffand, whose tongue was as sharp as a razor, did not rest until she had aroused even the gentle Duchess de Choiseul against Voltaire for his friendly relations with Catherine:

"What! Voltaire finds murder a matter for jest! And what a murder! The murder of a ruler by a subject, murder of a husband by his wife! This woman plots against her husband and monarch, takes his Empire and his life in the most cold-blooded way, steals the throne from her own son, and Voltaire calls this a family matter! . . . These shocking crimes are mere trifles, says he, faults, mistakes, easily atoned for. . . . So she is white as snow, the glory of her empire, beloved by her subjects, admired by the universe, the wonder of the century; you felt this as I do and you have answered him with the finest mockery. If he only could blush about it!"

7

These strict ladies, with their cut-and-dried code of morals, really knew nothing of the nobility of Catherine's soul. They knew nothing of how untiringly she strove to perfect her knowledge of Russia, what pains she was taking to preserve order and introduce improvements. She introduced vaccination, founded hospitals, poorhouses, foundling asylums. She encouraged every institution which could further civilization, science, art, and navigation, sent Russian scholars and artists abroad, founded a Russian Academy like the French, to foster and develop the language. She established schools for the poor, as well as more advanced schools, in all the larger cities and in many small towns. She reformed Russian court procedure, abolished torture, gathered representatives from all the provinces and gave them the problem of writing a new general code of law. From the feeble beginnings that had been made, she developed Russian navigation, freed the commerce in the interior of the country from all obstacles, thus at the same time improving farming conditions. She was constantly negotiating with foreign states for agreements that would facilitate imports and exports. She was moderate in her foreign policies. Only for a short time, after the fall of Orloff (in 1773), her new favorite Potemkin led Russia into a dangerous foreign policy. In all circumstances she remained Voltaire's true and enthusiastic disciple. She promoted culture and humanity, westernized her barbaric subjects with the same steadfastness of purpose as Peter the Great, but without his cruelty.

She was not only the greatest Empress Russia ever had had, but after Peter the Great Russia's greatest ruler.

Like Frederick the Great she supported the French intellectuals whom France's stupid King had persecuted, and she did it with more substantial means than were at the disposal of the Prussian King. Diderot was a man who made his living not without working very hard. Catherine bought his library for 15,000 livres and gave him 1000 livres yearly as curator of this library, the use of which he retained all his life. Voltaire wrote on this occasion (April 24, 1765): "Who would have thought that the day would come when the Scythians, whom we treat so unworthily here, would become the noble patrons of magnanimity, science and philosophy! Famous Diderot, permit me to express my enthusiasm."

Diderot was shy, avoided social life, especially the life of society in Paris. Catherine induced him to undertake the journey to St. Petersburg, and she succeeded by courtesy, in taming his bearish nature so that he felt at ease in her presence. He could not help treating her as his comrade and equal in all their conversations. He had only one manner toward his friends—straightforward. When he let slip a low expression in front of her, and stopped, embarrassed, the Empress said: "Go on! Among us men everything is permitted." When he became heated, and slapped the Czarina on the thigh as he used to do with his friends in Paris to make his point more emphatically, she was content to move her chair away.

On his last evening with her in St. Petersburg—as he tells it—he burst out in a violent fit of crying, "and she almost did too." She esteemed him as one of the two leaders of the Encyclopedists and the creator of a new style of criticism. He knew how to appreciate everything he read in the spirit in which it had been written, and Catherine was genius enough to value this ability.

As she won Diderot, so did she win the other prominent minds in France. D'Alembert and Holbach became her friends, and Grimm her literary correspondent.

8

The Empress had founded a female Saint-Cyr in St. Petersburg, and the institution was flourishing.

She wrote to Voltaire (February 10, 1772): "These young ladies surpass every expectation; they are making astonishing progress, and everybody agrees that they are as lovely as they are learned. In morals they are unimpeachable, without having contracted the cheap seriousness of the nuns. During the past two winters the playing of tragedies and comedies was instituted." But the available supply of plays was exhausted; the supervisor objected to plays which dealt with love. "What shall I do in that case? I do not know, and I am turning to you for help." Voltaire answers obligingly: "If these young girls are performing tragedies, a young man from my circle of friends has just written one in which love cannot be accused of playing any part. . . . I shall send it to Your Imperial Majesty as soon as it is printed."

The play he is referring to is his own new tragedy *Les Lois de Minos*. As he assures her there is no love scene in it. It is a protest against superstition and barbarity, inspired by the sentence of Calas, and especially by the fanatical and undignified attitude of the Parliament. His aim is obvious: to support the crown which had dissolved the Parliament in Paris.

On January 23, 1771, Louis XV had, to the delight of Voltaire, declared the offices of the members of the Parliament vacant. In other words, had dissolved the Parliament without any intention of assembling it again.

9

For the remaining years of his life he kept his gaze continually upon his Catherine. He encourages her, gives her his consent and approval as often she strives to introduce any reform in which he is interested. She for her part does not care for exaggerated compliments, much less for idolization, and she answers: "Let me remain on earth. Here I am better able to receive letters from you and from your friends." When he praises her as a legislator, she answers calmly: "These laws which are so much talked about are not yet in effect. Who can know whether they are good? Posterity, not we."

When, during the Russian-Turkish War, he expresses his hope that she may get all Turkey under her rule, she meets his exaggeration with common sense. He has expressed the wish that she may rebuild ancient Troy. She answers: "I renounce this rebuilding; I prefer the beautiful Neva to the Skamander. Here in St. Petersburg I have a whole suburb to build anew because a fire destroyed it in the spring."

She tells him, however, everything that could be of interest to him, and to Europe through him, about her peaceful reforms and about her wars. Once she confided to Prince de Ligne her modest fear that she might not have enough wit for Paris. That if she were there, simply as a Russian woman among the many travelers, she could get no one to come to supper with her. Sainte-Beuve said that she got this longed for supper in Paris, through her correspondence with Voltaire.

He began to value her highly because she set an example of religious tolerance. Later on, in spite of his love of peace, he wished her victory over the Turks, because of his enthusiasm for ancient Hellas. He was hopeful that Catherine would liberate Greece. The thought of taking this sacred soil from the Turks, those beautiful inspiring ruins of antiquity, those historic scenes where man first dared to think freely, filled him with enthusiasm and made him more militant than she herself.

He felt the glow which surrounds historic Athens, "this little town which will always enjoy a fame far greater than all its conquerors, even if they were lords of the globe." For him Hellas is the revered, the holy land, Europe's true sanctuary. Therefore he sings of Catherine's war against the Turks as the true crusade:

Voici le vrai temps des croisades!
Français, Bretons, Italiens . . .
Ecoutez Pallas qui vous crie:
Vengez-moi, vengez ma patrie!

He is very sad when she thinks of making peace without having assured the freedom of Greece.

Later he writes sorrowfully to Frederick: "You know what an occasion for rejoicing it would have been for me to see the descendants of Sophocles and Demosthenes set free."

What he hoped to live to see was accomplished in 1830, sixty years later.

10

It is easy to understand what a deep impression Voltaire's death must have made upon Catherine. She was shocked that such a man, the greatest of his country, was refused a grave in France.

To Melchior Grimm, she wrote: "Since Voltaire has died, it seems to me as if good humor has lost its honor. He was the God of grace. Please secure for me a very complete edition of his works, to restore and fortify my natural inclination to laughter; for if you don't get it to me before long you will hear nothing but elegies from me. For some time I have given up counting upon two things as consequences of my deeds: the gratitude of my people and posthumous fame. I do the best thing for its own sake and this is all that sustained me in the discouragement and indifference to all the affairs of this world, which overcame me at news of Voltaire's death. For he was my teacher. He, or rather his works, have shaped my mind. When I was younger I wished to please him. If I accomplished something I immediately had to tell him about it, for my own pleasure. He became so used to this that he scolded me if I did not report it to him myself and he heard it from others. Send me a hundred copies of the works of my master, so that I can distribute them everywhere. They shall serve as examples; I want the minds of my subjects to be moulded by them."

Catherine answers Grimm, when he compliments her on the strength, depth, and beauty in her letters, saying that if something like that were to be found, she owed it to Voltaire alone. She had never been deceived by spurious works attributed to him. She sensed immediately the grip of the lion. Nobody could successfully imitate it.

She would have liked to have a Casa Sancta erected in Ferney, corresponding to the house in Loreto.

XIII

PRECURSORS OF THE EARTHQUAKE

1

Madame de Pompadour had cherished the hope that the Prince de Soubise, in alliance with Austria, would destroy the power of Frederick the Great. When, after the battle of Rossbach, the Prime Minister, Cardinal Bernis, no longer shared this illusion and sought peace with Prussia, she lost confidence in him and not only deprived him of his position but also had him exiled.

His successor, the Duke de Choiseul, was a man of wonderful endowments. He had a splendid mind, malicious, witty, firm, quick and decisive, and though not handsome he had a winning personality, and was clever enough to assure his position by pretending a violent passion for Madame de Pompadour, whose friend and lover he became. He was supported by his sister, the Duchess Beatrice de Gramont, who was more to him than just a sister. She was quite devoted to her brother, shared his thoughts and worked with him and for him. After he had married an immense fortune, he had great power. He spent 800,000 francs a year on his household and had as many as eighty courses on his table every day.

He had come from Austria where he had been Ambassador, and was deeply interested in Madame de Pompadour's Austrian sympathies. He aimed at an alliance between France, Austria and Spain, and regarded England as the hereditary enemy. His main idea was to bind Spain firmly and permanently to France.

In internal politics he wanted to use the Jansenists and Parliaments against the Jesuits, and at the same time wanted to win the support of the literati, the philosophes, the encyclopedists and freethinking public opinion.

Madame de Pompadour's dream of glory had gone up in smoke. She had hoped to be able to connect with her name victories and conquests, to extend the borders of the kingdom, to see Frederick beg for mercy. Now she could scarcely count the defeats and misfortunes that followed Rossbach: the defeats of Minden and Willinghausen, the bombardment of the north coast of France, the blockade of the navy in the French harbors, losses in India and America as well as in Europe, and internal misery as a consequence of the wars. Agriculture suffered from the shortage of labor, commerce was destroyed, the finances exhausted, valuable territories lost with the surrender of Nova Scotia, Canada, the island of Cap-Breton, and all the islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the St. Lawrence River in North America.

Madame de Pompadour's health had been undermined long ago; from her earliest youth she had tuberculosis. The loss of the King's love and the forced abandonment of her dream of glory killed the queen of Rococo. She died April 15, 1764. Several days later the King said that he had never loved her and that he had only retained her because he knew that if he dismissed her she would die. Maria Leszczynska wrote, just after the Marquise was buried, to her friend, the President Hénault: "She who has just died is talked of as little here as though she had never existed. It really pays to live."

2

On August 19, 1743, Jeanne, the illegitimate daughter of Anne Béqus called Quantiny, came into the world. A financier by the name of Dumonceau was touched by the poverty of the mother, and put the pretty child under the care of his mistress, a courtesan who called herself Mademoiselle Frederica and who was not exactly a born educator. On the other hand she was clever enough to feel some qualms about her own future should the child, as seemed likely, develop into a beauty. She therefore persuaded Dumonceau to put the girl into the Saint-

Aure convent, which was devoted to the bringing up of girls whose position might early expose them to the temptations and dangers of life.

Her up-bringing here was doubtless far better and stricter than with Mademoiselle Frederica, but also far more monotonous and boring; for this reason the young Jeanne ran away from the convent one day and went through the streets with a big open box peddling watch chains, tobacco cases, false pearls, pins with false diamonds, and all sorts of pretty wares, which were bought, thanks to the pretty eyes of the young peddler. At the same time she silently offered herself in so effective a way that the lackeys of prominent men brought her to their masters so the latter could make their purchases first hand.

Soon she got a position in a millinery store and for some time was connected with a barber by the name of Lamet. Then her mother introduced her to the home of a neighbor who kept a gambling parlor. Here she met a crafty and unscrupulous idler with the appropriate nick-name of Roué, a Count du Barry, who made her the favorite of his harem in Paris. He soon realized that he could make his fortune by turning over the young woman, who had developed into an astonishing beauty, at a handsome profit.

In society this Count met Richelieu, and when the latter once chanced to remark that since Madame de Pompadour's death the King had surrendered completely to excesses, the remark took root in Jean du Barry's imagination. Several times he brought the young woman to the Marshal, sang her charms to him, and told him, half in jest, half in earnest, that he destined her for King Louis. Richelieu, for whom even Madame de Pompadour had been too bourgeoise, considered this girl of the people impossible. He rejected the Count's proposition, not without irony; but Jean du Barry did not give up his plan, and he pestered the Marshal so persistently that finally the latter said. "Well, speak to Lebel (the chamberlain); then perhaps your darling will some day get an invitation to the Louvre."

She got it, and she aroused the passion of the

King. She was provided with a false genealogical tree and also a husband; Jean du Barry wrote to his brother, Guillaume du Barry, a poor captain of the marines who lived in Toulouse. He had him come to Paris, where on July 23, 1768, for a substantial reward, he was married to Jeanne Béqus, called Mademoiselle Gomard de Vaubernier; then promptly returned to Toulouse.

The Countess Jeanne du Barry was given an apartment in Versailles on the third floor, which was connected with that of the King, and she quickly surrounded herself with luxury.

The Duke of Choiseul was still in power in France, and his numerous enemies had despaired of undermining his power over the King and abandoned the idea of overthrowing him, especially since Louis' age (sixty years) seemed to preclude any further possibility of his being influenced again through his erotic weaknesses. Now suddenly and unexpectedly Madame du Barry appeared.

Choiseul regarded her with cold contempt. His sister, the Duchess de Gramont, had planned to win and lead the King. But the King wanted no more women playing politics in his proximity. All the efforts and coquetries of Madame de Gramont came to naught before his coolness. True, she was pretty and fiery and clever. Certainly, in firmness and character she outshone the Countess du Barry—which was tragically revealed during the Reign of Terror when each faced the revolutionary tribune on her own merits and stood alone on the scaffold. But here it was not a question of a contest in strength of character.

The Duchess was furious, and following the habit of the Times, she put scurrilous ballads in circulation.

But Richelieu, who had been supplanted by Choiseul, saw the chance for revenge by promoting Madame du Barry. He was resolved to introduce her at Court. But uneasily as always, the King at first fought shy of this. Slowly, very slowly, his resistance was able to be overcome, and finally one evening (April 30, 1769) Madame du Barry appeared in the door of the hall of the palace, so splendid, so stunning in her beauty that even her opponents could not repress an outburst of admiration. There she stood, in a dress of the type that eighteenth century ladies called *un habit de combat,* ornamented with diamonds worth 100,000 francs, with her marvelous curly hair and her incomparable hands and feet—perfectly charming and bewitching. We can get an idea of her beauty from the bust by Caffieri in the Library at the Louvre.

When she sent her regards to Voltaire, she ordered that he should be given two kisses from her with her portrait. He answered: "Please be not offended, Madame, that I returned the kisses to the portrait."

3

It might seem as though the enemies of the Duke de Choiseul lacked a supporting party at Court. The clerical party had lost its powerful protectors. The Dauphin was dead. The Dauphine was dead. The Queen was dead.

But there still remained one powerful advocate of religious authority and monarchistic autocracy, a protector of the Jesuits, who all his life had felt himself to be the antithesis of Choiseul. This was the Duke d'Aiguillon, in his youth the Duke d'Agenois, the lover of the Duchess de Châteauroux, at the time that she still was Madame de la Tournelle.

In 1745 he had been removed from the intimate circle at Court because of the jealousy of Louis XV. He had spent seventeen years in disgrace, and only in 1762 was he again introduced in Versailles, where he won the friendship of the Dauphin. Choiseul, fearing his influence, sent him to Brittany as governor. Here the Duke was suspected of having produced false witnesses in the proceedings which the Jesuit party had instituted against the attorney-general de la Chalotais.

Choiseul's followers also charged Aiguillon with having appropriated state funds, while Aiguillon's party accused Choiseul of having poisoned the Dauphin and his wife.

Madame du Barry had unexpectedly become the palladium of the Jesuit party at Court. Her circle of hangers-on made a great addition to its ranks when the Chancellor of France joined them. Maupeou had, in 1768, been appointed Chancellor of France in payment for his promise to Choiseul that he would destroy Aiguillon. Maupeou had undertaken to fix the outcome of the trial which was being held before the Parliament of Paris to determine the guilt or innocence of Aiguillon's conduct in Bretagne.

Maupeou was clever, malicious, ruthless and energetic, with a hard, relentless ambition.

Aiguillon's trial dragged on. Maupeou, who was ostensibly his ally, and therefore brought his case before a court in Paris, was in reality malevolent, and when it seemed that he would be dismissed he succeeded in having the case taken before another court, a *lit de justice,* which on July 2, 1770, decided that Aiguillon was guilty of having "committed deeds which spotted his honor" and therefore deprived him of his privileges as a Peer of France until sentence should be imposed.

This hostile procedure of the Parliament opened Madame du Barry's eyes to the danger of the Duke, and she offered him an alliance. He persuaded her to try to induce the King to exile the Duchess de Gramont.

He also explained to her that there was no safety for her as long as the Duke de Choiseul was Minister. Madame du Barry, by a hundred merry and humorous remarks, got the King accustomed to the idea of dismissing Choiseul. For instance, one day when she had discharged her cook, she said to Louis: "I have discharged my Choiseul."

Aiguillon saw that he could not depend upon Madame du Barry until he had won her over entirely. She was not made of stone, and any girl who not long since had bestowed her favors upon a barber would scarcely turn up her nose at a handsome Duke.

His passion in his liaison with Madame du Barry was probably inspired at first by mere diplomacy, and perhaps also somewhat by the memory of the insult to which Louis had subjected him because of his relations with Madame de la Tournelle. But before long he became really in love with the Countess, and was sure that she would cause the disgrace of the Duke de Choiseul. The latter, whom the King had shortly before assured that no danger of any sort threatened his Ministry, received, on December 24, 1770, a *lettre de cachet* which dismissed him from all his offices and exiled him to Chanteloup. La Vrillière became his successor.

After Choiseul had been removed, Maupeou and Aiguillon, united by a common hatred, set to work on the problem of dealing the decisive blow to the Parliament of Paris, which several days before the downfall of Choiseul, had suspended consideration of civil lawsuits under the pretext that "the members, in their deep sorrow, did not have their thoughts free enough to judge competently of the property, life and honor of the subjects of the King."

4

After La Barre had been executed as a victim of the brutality and stupidity of the Parliament of Paris, Voltaire's hatred of the various Parliaments of France had increased daily. His ingenious tale *L'Homme aux quarante écus* (of February, 1768), which tried to teach the government and the people some common sense notions of economics, and strove especially for a reformation of the unfair French tax system, was sentenced by order of the Parliament to be burned on the pyre—which glorious sentence was repeated in Rome and carried out on November 29, 1771.

A poor shop apprentice, Jean Baptiste Josserand, had accepted some books as a payment from somebody who owed him money, and had sold them to the dealer Jean Lecuyer and his wife Marie Suisse. Among these books were *Le Christianisme dévoilé,* which was ascribed to Damilaville, a tragedy by Fontenelle, and Voltaire's *L'Homme aux quarante écus;* not only were these three books condemned to the pyre, but all three defendants, Josserand, Lecuyer and Marie Suisse were, on September 27, 1768, sentenced to stand for three days in the pillory. Josserand and Lecuyer were also to be branded, and Josserand was sent to the galleys for nine years, Lecuyer for five years, while Madame Lecuyer was to have five years imprisonment in La Salpetrière. Josserand died the day after he had been put on the pillory. Several days later (October 5) the Parliament issued a warrant for the arrest of Voltaire (which was not carried out), as the author of "a wicked book menacing to good morals."

5

Voltaire had more strength in the three fingers which held his pen than all the Parliaments of France in their clenched fists. In 1769 he published an historical work which delivered a staggering blow at the Parliamentarians of Paris.

Histoire du Parlament de Paris, par M. l'abbé Big . . ., which appeared in Amsterdam, made the Parliament a laughing-stock, without making a single untrue or slanderous statement. To recount the history of the Parliament meant to exterminate it.

The Parliament felt he had their range so well that it put up all sorts of obstacles to the sale of the book. Every bookseller who sold a copy was punished with the severest penalties. Nevertheless by the following year, 1770, the eighth edition came out, in which the original author's name is spelled out: L'abbé Bigore.

Of course, it was known at once who the real author of the book was, and it was determined not to lose any time with the empty formality of burning the book, but to seek definite proof of the identity of the author and institute proceedings against him.

But Voltaire was too clever for the Parliament. He wrote in a letter (of July 5, 1769) which was reproduced in *Le Mercure français:* "To produce such a work would have required at least a full year of research in the archives, and even after one has plumbed to this depth it is very difficult to gather one's findings and present them in a readable book. Such a work would become more a heavy report than a history. If any bookseller is trying to pass the book off as written by me, I hereby assure him that he will gain nothing by that. Far from enabling him to sell one more copy, it would on the contrary harm the reputation of the book. It would be absurd to state that I could have burgled the records of France's judiciary department, and collected such an enormous lot of material—I who have been absent from France for over twenty years and before that have spent nearly all of my time in the country, away from Paris, busy with many different things."

In order to mislead his persecutors Voltaire, in a letter to Thiriot, of August 9, 1769, even attacked the book and called its last chapters "a masterpiece of errors and awkwardness, a crime against the language."

Voltaire, of course, had not searched through the archives himself. But in Paris he had enough friends who were glad to do it for him.

When the attorney-general Séguier visited Voltaire in Ferney, in the autumn of 1770, he told his host in an elaborately off-hand manner that four members of the Parliament were continually begging him to have *l'Histoire du Parlament* burned, and that he would be compelled in February, 1771, to start an investigation to discover the author. Voltaire answered no less calmly that he had had no part whatsoever in the writing of this work, which he considered on the whole was very truthful. If it were possible for an assembly to feel gratitude, the Parliament, in his opinion, owed such a feeling to this unknown author, who had used the greatest consideration in his description. Voltaire actually had shown a certain consideration; he had passed over in silence facts about which he had spoken in another place. Thus he had lightly passed over the shocking sentences of La Barre and Lally.

Séguier's investigation, however, did not take place chiefly because, as we have seen, the Parliaments had other matters to occupy their thoughts.

6

The work had scarcely been published, when Voltaire was informed of a new judiciary murder.

One day on the highway in Lorraine, near Bleurville, a man was found murdered. Suspicion fell on a poor farmer by the name of Martin, who during the night of the murder had quietly slept with his family in his house. The murdered man, it was said, had stolen Martin's jacket, and had been seen wearing it; besides footprints led from the scene of the murder to Martin's house. Martin was confronted with a man who insisted that he had witnessed the crime from a hiding place; but the man did not identify him as the murderer. Martin, thinking that now he was safe, cried out in his joy: "Thank God, there is at least one who does not recognize the murderer in me!"—The court was so stupid as to regard this exclamation as an involuntary confession of guilt.

Martin was tortured and sentenced, in the first instance, to the wheel, although neither his neighbors nor his wife and children had been questioned, and although his house had never been examined for evidence. Of course, the money which had been taken from the murdered man was not found on Martin.

The Parliament in Paris acted as the court of the second instance. But, as Voltaire correctly points out, it went through the matter hastily because it was flooded with trials; for at that time there were no less than twenty-two of the departments of France under its jurisdiction. Besides, the Parliament was so occupied with the political situation that it took little pains in purely judiciary matters. Hence it did not go carefully into the details of the case, and the poor, simple and ignorant Martin was badly equipped to defend himself against the horrible charge, in which, according to the opinion of his conscienceless judges, more than mere appearances were against him. Parliament hastily confirmed the sentence of the sub-court.

The wretched Martin was broken upon the wheel. When he was stretched upon the St. Andrew's cross on which his extremities were to be broken, he asked to be permitted to raise his arms toward heaven in token of his innocence.

Not long afterward a condemned criminal confessed to the murder for which Martin had been broken upon the wheel. Martin's family had fled to Austria; his tiny farm had been confiscated; his relatives had no idea that his innocence had been revealed.

As soon as Voltaire heard of this he wrote to d'Alembert and to Elie de Beaumont asking for further information. Elie de Beaumont refused. D'Alembert exerted himself to the utmost (October 15, 1769) "to cover these scoundrels with the shame they deserved." But Voltaire was unable to interest himself personally in the Martin case. "I can't possibly," he wrote to d'Argental on August 30, 1769, "be the Don Quixote of everybody who is hanged or broken on the wheel." But Damilaville, his usual seconder in cases of this kind, was dead, d'Alembert was not fit to carry the matter through himself, and consequently poor Martin's honor was never reestablished. However, one can see from Voltaire's letters (March 3, 1770, and still later in October, 1775) that he was very anxious to help the unfortunate family.

7

The judgments of July 2, 1770, by which the Parliament tried to brand the Duke d'Aiguillon as dishonest, in defiance of the King's order to drop the proceedings, was not unreasonably interpreted by Louis XV as a personal insult. For Aiguillon was not only the friend of Madame du Barry, but had also won the confidence of the King.

Maupeou knew how to capitalize the King's resentment. Some time before he had occupied the position of first President of the Parliament of Paris.

and had engaged in a zealous fight for a new hearing for La Barre, but had got such an unfavorable impression of his colleagues that he was only too pleased at an opportunity to shatter their power. It was his intention to deprive them of all political influence and to limit their scope to that of judiciary body only.

In November, 1770, he succeeded in inducing Louis to give up his former indecisive and hesitating attitude and to give his endorsement to a decisive action. On November 27 the Parliament issued an edict, the preamble of which reviewed all its mistakes and demanded absolute obedience to the Royal will.

The edict forbade the several Parliaments ever again to try to unite and speak as one organization; they must never again discontinue the administration of justice by mutual consent. They were, of course, allowed to offer suggestions to the King; but if these were not considered they were obliged to ratify and pass at once the laws sent them by the King. Naturally, the Parliament refused to ratify this very edict.

The King replied with an order from his Cabinet, in which he demanded obedience. Now the entire Parliament resigned. Thereupon during the night of January 19 to January 20, 1771, every member of the Parliament received a personal *lettre de cachet* ordering him to resume the performance of public business; the assembled Parliament, however, stuck by its guns unanimously. Then in the following night every single member received a new *lettre de cachet* informing him of his dismissal, in the name of the King and of the Privy Council, and designating his place of exile.

The previous sphere of action of the Parliament of Paris was reduced by the establishment of six new Supreme Courts in various cities. In Paris a new Parliament of seventy-five members was formed and all the seats were promptly filled with men who knew how to obey.

The provincial Parliaments saw what they had to expect, and they promptly protested in advance. But they did not frighten Maupeou. And when they were all declared dissolved and new Parliaments were to be formed, many of the members were so intimidated that they promised obedience and asked to be accepted as members of the new courts.

Although all these happenings were an attempt to strengthen the Crown by the establishment of autocracy, which so far had not been known in France, the members of the Parliament as well as the majority of the citizens of France viewed this *coup d'état,* not without reason, as a herald of the collapse of the monarchy. This is evidenced in many political songs of the time.

Many people had been blinded by the idea that the Parliaments—a collection of bigoted, narrow-minded, power-greedy and blood-thirsty blockheads—had been a protection to the freedom of the citizen. And the entire French nation commenced a fermentation that gave a warning of the revolution that was to burst forth seventeen years later.

8

Maupeou's coup d'état had certain advantages. It was an advantage that the office of judge was no longer purchasable, even though the aim of the Minister had been only to make the judges dependent on the Crown. It was an advantage that, with the reduced area of the court's jurisdiction, the expenses of trial as well as the distance between the evidence of the defendant and the court were reduced, even though the sole aim of the Minister had been to cut down the power of the Parliament of Paris, today one cannot imagine how terrific the court costs were. The expenses of transportation there and back, of the trial and execution of Martin—as Voltaire has shown—were more than the combined annual income of all councillors at all the six newly instituted tribunals.

Maupeou had not without reason counted upon Voltaire's contempt for the old Parliaments when he approached him for support of the new institutions.

Although Voltaire denied everything he wrote on this occasion, it is certain that he was the author of at least seven articles in praise of the newly founded courts. There must really have been a great deal of naivete still in his make-up. He seriously entertained the hope that these would be better than the old parliaments. The titles of the seven articles are: *Lettre d'un jeune Abbé sur la vénalité des charges. Réponse aux remontrances de la cour des Aides, par un membre des nouveaux conseils souverains. Avis important d'un gentilhomme à toute la noblesse du royaume. Sentiments des six conseils établis par le roi et de tous les bons citoyens. Très humbles et très respectueuses remontrances du grenier à sel. Les peuples aux parlements. L'Equivoque.*

Voltaire led the upheaval which rocked France over the events that followed. The jurisdiction of the Parliaments had been reduced and their importance curtailed with it. Making use of the double meaning of the word Parliament they had tried to persuade themselves and others that their importance corresponded to that of the English Houses of Parliament, and hence had made a specialty of politics. This was the chief reason why their judgments had been hasty and disgraceful. Now such judiciary murders would no longer occur. All cases where there was any doubt should hereafter be dismissed. The King was now thinking of abolishing the torture.

Maupeou not only had Voltaire's articles reprinted, but even enlarged by the insertion of statements Voltaire had used elsewhere as for instance in his attack upon the judges who "in our eyes are nothing but official murderers"; this expression had originally been used against the judges in the trial of La Barre. Maupeou did not scruple to use words which at the time Voltaire had written them were directed at himself.

The exile of the members of the Parliament could not stir Voltaire's pity. On February 25, 1771, he wrote to the Marquis de Florian: "Do the murderers of La Barre deserve pity because they now have to live in the country? I have had to live for seventeen years in the country, and I have murdered nobody."

Of great importance to progress in the administration of justice was the epoch-making speech delivered and published in 1766 by the attorney general Antoine de Servan, then only twenty-seven years old. It was inspired entirely by Voltaire's influence. This same year Servan had visited Voltaire in Ferney, and after that they kept up a steady correspondence. Servan fulfilled every hope Voltaire had placed in him. In the eyes of the other lawyers Servan's demands amounted to a complete revolution of the social order. He wished not only the abolishment of torture and capital punishment, but also any penalty whatsoever for religious transgressions; he even advocated the introduction of the system of trial by jury. He said that more important than the punishment of crime was its prevention, and as the best means of attaining that he acclaimed education.

9

In 1771 the newly formed Parliament of Toulouse handed down the final verdict on the Sirven case. The earlier verdict of 1769 which had merely put him *hors de cour* was reversed and the defendant was acquitted. The sentence imposed in her absence upon the deceased Madame Sirven was quashed and replaced by a complete exoneration of "the false and slanderous charge of murder."

Voltaire could rejoice in the victory won. He wrote: "It took only two hours to sentence this family to death. But it took nine years for the courts to make official acknowledgment of their innocence." The justice, however, was not perfect. Sirven's confiscated property was restored to him, to be sure, but he was not awarded the modest damages of 20,000 livres which he had demanded; and it is absurd that it was insisted that he should pay the costs of the first trial which had pronounced against him the sentence in default.

After the *coup d'état* Maupeou had occasion to take up again a trial which had been conducted in the most outrageous way under the old conditions. This awakened in various people the hope that the new form of administration would provide greater fairness.

A man by the name of Montbailli was living with his wife in the house of his mother, who owned a tobacco factory. This was in St. Omer, in July, 1770. The young woman had formerly been a worker in the factory. The relations between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law were not good; the old woman considered her son's wife was neither rich enough nor beautiful enough for him. One day the old woman, who was a heavy drinker, obtained a court order demanding that the young couple leave the house. The son endeavored to patch things up with his mother, who lay drunk in bed, and he even managed to succeed in doing so. She got up, talked peacefully with her children, drank some more, and then went back to bed to sleep off her stupor. This was on July 27, 1770.

Next morning when a seamstress came to speak with the old woman, the son asked her to wait until his mother got up. But later when he tried to awaken her he was horrified to discover that she was dead. Everything indicated that she had died from a stroke. The neighbors came over to condole. On July 29, the body was put in the coffin to be buried, when suddenly in St. Omer the rumor arose that the children must have killed the old woman to keep from being put out.

The couple was arrested. Each, from his isolated cell, declared that the old woman had changed her mind, so that they were not in any danger. And the other inmates of the house testified that it had been very quiet all night long. But the court was under the pressure of public opinion, which, as Voltaire says, was in this case formed by the mob. Both husband and wife were for the time being kept in prison. The Royal attorney appealed to the higher court of the Province of Artois, which had Arras as capital and this court sentenced the man and his wife to death. But as Madame Montbailli was pregnant, her execution was postponed.

Montbailli was brought to St. Omer and immediately put to the severest torture which, however, made him confess nothing, although Dominican monks threatened him with the direst punishments of Hell if he did not come out with his guilt. He also refused to plead guilty in his religious confession. When his right hand was cut off, he said: "This hand committed no matricide." When his extremities were broken and when he was tied to the wheel, he never ceased asserting his innocence. Then he was thrown alive into a fire.

There was still a chance to get the wife off. Voltaire got the lawyer de Taillis to send him the documents of the case, and wrote his work *La méprise d'Arras.* In the introduction he reviewed all recent judiciary murders in France and pointed out that Montbailli's trial had created no sensation, merely because it was a poor family of the common people; he hoped that never again would a sentence of this sort be imposed without weighty reasons.

The Royal Council heard his protest, granted the petition for a new trial, and as in the meantime the *coup d'état* had taken place and the court in Arras had been re-formed under the new order, Madame Montbailli was acquitted and her executed husband exonerated. At the same time the judge exhorted all court physicians to make use of every means their science provided for determining the cause of death by autopsy. When the widow returned to St. Omer the stupid, easily swayed temper of the people had changed, and her return to the city was like a triumphal procession.

10

It might seem as though Maupeou had succeeded in winning over public opinion, which had been so hostile to him and to his new Parliaments. The Princes of the Royal family could not hold out against the Crown for any length of time. The former members of the Parliaments had to give up their arrogant opposition, and many of them had asked to be accepted as members in the new courts. It was especially significant that the lawyers, who had resigned at first, had now fallen into line. Voltaire, who took the part of the Chancellor, was so confident that on January 6, 1771, he wrote a letter to Madame du Deffand expressing his confident hope that in less than six weeks there would be no more talk about the *coup d'état* and everybody would be used to the new order. The new Parliaments, in passing the financial grant, showed a shameful submissiveness toward the power of the Crown.

Then it happened that a trial showed the new system of judiciary administration in the most unfavorable light, and aroused the public against the courts instituted by Maupeou and defended by Voltaire.

11

In the next big trial, one which undermined the new constitution in France so deeply that the entire social order became unbalanced, the defendant was the first intellectual successor of Voltaire, in a higher sense his only son, Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais. It was he who undermined the new legal system, of which Voltaire had expected such great things.

Since the year 1764 Beaumarchais, who was then thirty-two years old, had tried to come in touch with Voltaire. Unfortunately his letters have been lost, and as Voltaire on his side has left no written record of this early connection, we know it only from a letter Beaumarchais wrote from Madrid to a friend:

"I have received a letter from Monsieur de Voltaire. Jokingly he sends his best wishes to my thirty two sound teeth, my merry philosophy and my youth. His letter is very fine; but mine demanded this answer to a degree that I believe I could have written it myself. He would like some information about the land in which I am now. I would like most to give him the answer which Signor de Caro gave yesterday, at the house of Senor de Grimaldi, to the Marquise of Arissa. She asked him what he thought of Spain? —'Madame,' he said, 'I beg you permit me to postpone my answer until I am out of the country; I am too honest and too polite to give the answer at the house of a Minister of the King.' "

Voltaire seems to have believed in Spain's intellectual enlightenment. In a letter to d'Alembert (March 25, 1765) he says that she was well on her way to throwing off the yoke of fanaticism and ignorance. A comment Beaumarchais wrote to the Duke La Vallière shows the case was different:

"One of the strongest impressions I received in the wonderful monastery (San Lorenzo, in Escurial) was the condemnation of nearly all of our modern philosophers, which was posted publicly near the monks' choir. There are listed the forbidden works and their authors, above all your friend, Voltaire. Not only the works he has already produced are condemned, but also the works he will create in the future, as only evil can flow from such a pen. I wrote to him from Bayonne, to deliver the messages given me by the Duke of Laval and yourself. He let three months go by without answering me, and finally sent the answer to Versailles assuming that I had returned and, as he said, being anxious not to get me in trouble with the Inquisition if I were to receive a letter from him in Spain; by accident the letter has reached me here just the same."

By a strange fate Voltaire, who was preëminently the one man in France to understand and appreciate Beaumarchais at once, found himself in the embarrassing position of wanting to think it over before he thanked him for the clever self-defense which Beaumarchais sent him. The cause of this was that Voltaire's contempt for the old Parliament had inevitably persuaded him to support the formation of the new ones. But Beaumarchais had to turn against the new Parliament. And that with such effectiveness and success in his suit against Goëzman that Paris was circulating the pun: Louis Quinze overthrew the old Parliament, and quinze Louis overthrew the new. This meant the fifteen louis d'ors Madame Goëzman had taken from Beaumarchais and kept.

From this reserve on Voltaire's part toward the promising younger genius, one must not be led to conclude that he felt a coolness toward Beaumarchais. He certainly did not begrudge him his abilities, over which he rejoiced; but he envied his right to be in Paris, from which he was excluded. Hence these words in a letter to Richelieu: "It is funny that a watchmaker's apprentice, for whose arrest a warrant has been issued, can stay in Paris, and not I." To the Marquis de Florian (who had married one of his nieces) he writes on January 3, 1774: "Beaumarchais' memoranda of defense are of all I ever read the strongest, keenest, most interesting, laughter-inducing and shameful to his adversary. He fights ten or twelve opponents simultaneously and knocks them down, like Harlequin when he gets wild and knocks down a whole night patrol."

Voltaire awaits with keen anticipation every new number of these memoranda, which also made such a deep impression upon Goethe. When he received the fourth memorandum, Voltaire wrote: "I have read Beaumarchais' fourth memorandum. I am still all stirred up, filled with it, amazed. Never before has the like been seen in a regular trial."

He immediately conceived the best opinion of the author, and when Beaumarchais' opponents countered with the charge that Beaumarchais had poisoned three wives, Voltaire did not believe it for a moment: nobody could convince him that such a brilliant and witty man was a poisoner.

Every letter Voltaire sent from Ferney was circulated all over Paris on its arrival, and became as well known as today a newspaper article printed in many thousand copies. One evening, when Beaumarchais' Eugenie was played at the Théâtre Français, a gentleman in the audience rose in his seat and spoke in a loud voice against the weakness of the play and also against the crimes of the author. He stated among other things, that at the house of Count d'Argental he had heard a letter from Voltaire in which the poet had insisted that Beaumarchais had not poisoned his three wives. "But," he concluded, "that is something that the members of the Parliament know to be a fact."

The one whom he had been addressing got up from his seat and said calmly:

"Monsieur, it is an established fact that this rogue has poisoned his three wives, although he has been married only twice. In Maupeou's Parliament it is also known that he ate his father-in-law in a meat pie, after crushing his own mother between two slices of bread and butter, and I know this the better as I myself am Beaumarchais. I would have you arrested now, as I have a number of witnesses to your words, if I could not see by your confused expression that you are not one of those treacherous fellows who make up these contemptible libels, but just one of those idiots who are in the habit of spreading them —not, incidentally, without some little danger to your own person."

12

The origin of the Beaumarchais trial, which fanned the hatred against the Chancellor into a blaze, was not political.

Pâris-Duverney, the third of the famous brothers, died on July 17, 1770. Beaumarchais had done him the great service of persuading Louis XV to visit the military academy founded by Madame de Pompadour. In return the banker wished to make Beaumarchais' fortune; he gave him large credits for his many undertakings and speculations.

Beaumarchais possessed a document to prove this, a paper outlining the nature of the complex transactions that had taken place unquestionably authentic and signed by Pâris-Duverney. The account showed a balance of 15,000 livres to the credit of Beaumarchais. Pâris-Duverney had further bound himself in this document to let the future dramatist have a loan of 75,000 livres for eight years, free of interest.

The Count de la Blache, who was the heir of the banker, although he recognized the signature as genuine, insisted that the sheet had been blank and that Beaumarchais had filled it out. Consequently he would neither make the loan nor pay the sum Beaumarchais had to his credit. He referred to the necessity of the document's being drawn up in two copies, but stated that the other copy could not be found among Duverney's papers.

Nevertheless the document was declared valid and authentic on February 22, 1772.

La Blache appealed to the Parliament of Paris, where the case came up in March, 1773.

To Beaumarchais' great disadvantage, Count Saint-Florentin had put him in prison because of an unfortunate quarrel with the Duke de Chaulnes over a love affair. This arrest was the more unjust in that Beaumarchais and the Duke had both been acquitted in this affair by the Marshals of France, whose court had jurisdiction in a quarrel between noblemen. The arbitrary imprisonment prevented him from conducting in person his trial before the Parliament.

Thus the Count de la Blache had a chance to slander Beaumarchais and to start the rumor about the three poisoned wives.

On April 6, 1773, the Parliament reversed the decision in his favor of February 22, 1772, declared the document signed by Duverney invalid and forged, and sentenced Beaumarchais to a fine far in excess of all he possessed.

When in May he was discharged from prison, an absolutely ruined man, a third trial threatened him, the verdict in which, if unfavorable, would have meant his sentence to the galley.

13

It was of especial importance for Beaumarchais to speak with the judge who was to preside at his trial. This was the Parliament Councillor, Louis Goëzman. In his second marriage he had acquired a pretty young wife, who had been heard to say without a blush that a generous client, whose case was good and who did not ask anything wrong, did not offend her finer feelings by a present. She said it was impossible for her to live on the income of her husband, and that she knew the art of plucking a chicken without making it cry.

Goëzman's publisher, Lejay, who had often heard the woman speak in this manner, being told that Beaumarchais was desperate and had tried in vain to get an interview with the judge, gave Beaumarchais a hint that to assure one's self of Goëzman's "love of justice" there was nothing else to do but to pay the young woman a gratuity which was estimated at one hundred louis d'or. This amount Beaumarchais sent to Lejay, who gave it to Madame Goëzman. The defendant, however, obtained only a very short audience.

To be admitted to a second and longer interview, Beaumarchais had again to approach the wife of the councillor, who this time demanded and got a diamond-studded watch valued at another one hundred louis d'or for "her husband's secretary." But she had Lejay guarantee that if no further interview were granted, Beaumarchais was to be returned the one hundred louis d'or as well as the watch.

As the second audience was refused, and as Goëzman spoke before the Parliament in favor of la Blache, these gifts were returned as agreed upon; only the fifteen louis d'or for the secretary were withheld.

But Beaumarchais demanded these fifteen louis d'or also as he learned that the secretary had never seen one of the fifteen.

Madame Goëzman refused to return the money, and Beaumarchais wrote her a letter accusing her of having appropriated it. This was a clever move; for now Beaumarchais put all his bets on a single card. He hoped to be able to prove his suspicion that Goëzman had been bribed by La Blache, and he saw a chance of attaining in this way the quashing of the sentence.

Madame Goëzman denied having received the fifteen louis d'or; she said the defendant had offered her money in vain, in an effort to influence her husband's vote.

Beaumarchais could save himself only by appealing to public opinion and showing how the events had actually taken place, and this he did in a brilliant way.

Even if Goëzman in the beginning had not known anything about his wife's action, he must have become aware of it very soon. He felt his career as a judge and man of honor threatened, and he therefore left no means unemployed. First he appealed to the police; but when the police commissioner refused to issue a *lettre de cachet* against Beaumarchais he persuaded the publisher Lejay to publish a dishonest report written by Goëzman himself, stating that the defendant had implored Lejay to go to Madame Goëzman and try to get her to accept a bribe which she had declined at once.

On the basis of this false evidence Goëzman reported Beaumarchais to the Parliament for attempted bribery and for libel. That his wife had kept the fifteen louis d'or he concealed, of course. He got his friend Francois Marin, the Royal Censor, to go to see Beaumarchais and try to persuade him to drop the quarrel over the wretched fifteen louis d'or.

Beaumarchais was too clever to do any such thing. He knew that this trifling three hundred and sixty francs was the key point in the case he was building up for himself. His position was wretched enough from the start, as the verdict of the La Blache trial had disgraced him. The judges would naturally do everything to save their colleague. Beaumarchais could not even find a lawyer to take his case, so that the President or the Parliament was forced to assign one to him. As Beaumarchais could place no confidence in Parliament he bent all his genius to the problem of submitting his case to the judgment of the reading public, and here he won his trial so brilliantly that he became the darling of the French people.

14

The importance of the four *Mémoirs*, which Beaumarchais published (1774-1778) in connection with his trial, is the fact that in them the future author of *Figaro* raised the question: was the private citizen who had no powerful protector without defense against the arbitrariness and partiality of the courts? And he hardly considered the question whether the new Parliaments were any better than the old. Beaumarchais revealed, as Voltaire had done before him, the tricks and subterfuges which the administration of justice employed, and like Voltaire he struck at the roots of the tyranny under which the population was suffering. In its haughtiness the Parliament had been so careless as to overlook the possibility that among those it injured there might be a genius capable of taking revenge.

For the first time, in Beaumarchais' *Mémoirs,* a defendant revealed the mysteries of the secret investigation, and acquainted the public with everything that happened to him. This man was so clever in his attack that it was impossible to punish him for the mockery with which he inundated his judges. Ostensibly he had the most profound devotion to them.

Among other things he proved concerning the men who had accused him of having poisoned his wives, was that one, Goëzman, was a forger who, to deny the paternity of his bastard child, had forged a birth certificate; and he demonstrated that another, Marin, was the boldest grafter in his official position. Marin had been entrusted with the supervision of the Distribution of pamphlets in defense of Maupeou; nevertheless he had, when he saw in it a profit, distributed pamphlets directly opposed to the Chancellor. Often he let a poor book-agent who peddled writings be sent to the galleys, but he himself profited by the secret sale of confiscated political or philosophical books.

After the publication of the second memorandum Voltaire wrote: "What a man! He embraces in himself: intellect, earnestness, reason, humor, energy. He knows how to appeal to the feelings. In short, he is successful in every kind of eloquence. He destroys his opponents and routs his judges; I can excuse all of his carelessnesses and all his violence." And after the fourth memorandum Voltaire writes to the Marquis de Florian: 'I know of no comedy more brilliantly amusing, no tragedy more deeply touching, no story more gripping. . . . Goëzman is dragged in the mud; but Marin is still more deeply bogged."

Beaumarchais was resolved to commit suicide if the Parliament should impose upon him the penalty which was to be expected, the galleys. For, the Parliament could sentence him to any one of the following penalties: rebuke, disgraceful rebuke, a fine, the pillory, branding, the galleys for life. The resentment of the Parliament was so great that it would have preferred to give him the most severe penalty. But they were forced to pay consideration to clearly expressed public opinion.

It was decided to punish Beaumarchais by a "disgraceful rebuke," which would cause him to be dishonored so that he forfeited, not only all his offices and titles, but also all his rights of citizenship. His four memoranda were, "because of their bold and disrespectful tone which insulted the dignity of the Court as a whole and some of its members in particular," to be torn up by the hangman at the foot of the great stairway of the Palace of Justice and thrown in the fire.

But the reputation of the court had fallen so low that though the books were burned, it was not dared to carry out the sentence against Beaumarchais. He was neither arrested nor subjected to the humiliation to which he had been condemned, of having to kneel in public and listen to the reading of the rebuke. When the gallery heard the sentence pronounced they spit at the judges and rushed at them with such violence that the members had to flee the palace by secret ways to escape the rage of the populace.

The Duke de Chartres gave a splendid feast in Beaumarchais' honor.

The Prince of Conti, descendant of the great Condé, who had commanded in Italy, had accomplished the crossing of the Alps, conquered Château-Dauphin, won the battle of Coni and taken the Austrian fort at Mons, of whom Voltaire had written:

> Conti, qu'on censurait et que l'univers loue,
> Est un autre Annibal qui n'a point de Capoue.

this Prince wrote Beaumarchais: "I believe I am from a good enough family to set France an example for how a great citizen should be honored."

15

Voltaire was now in his eighties; but he had never been more active, never planned so many undertakings. His strength of mind had not only not lessened with the years, but was greater than ever before. It is like a memory from Voltaire's youth when Frederick, who in the course of years was again and again overwhelmed with love and admiration for the idol of his youth, calls him the God of Taste. Voltaire was now primarily a man of action. Nevertheless, Frederick's letter of February, 1773, deserves to be mentioned here:

"I am in receipt of your letter and your charming verses which contradict your age. No, I cannot believe your words. You are either still young, or you have learned how to clip the wings of time.

"It is foolhardy to try to answer you in verse; but you know that people of my stamp often take liberties that would not be approved of in others. A certain Cotys, King of a very barbaric country, entered into a correspondence with Ovid when the latter was exiled to Tomi. It must therefore be permitted to a modern ruler of a less barbaric country to write to the Apollo of Ferney.

From 1770-1777 Voltaire fights with cunning caution, but with persistent and persuasive clearness, for the abolition of the serfdom in his region at the foot of the Jura mountains. In the years 1784-1789 Beaumarchais, with Condorcet, undertook an edition of Voltaire's works in seventy volumes (in Kehl, as Voltaire was not permitted to be published in France), an edition on which, thanks to unfavorable conditions, he lost one million francs. In it he wrote an introduction to some of Voltaire's writings which are concerned with his fight for the serfs, from which can be seen that in spite of the old master's eloquence everything remained unchanged as long as he was alive. Only the revolution freed these slaves.

By employing old falsified documents the Benedictine monks, who had become proprietors of the territory between the Jura mountains and Saint-

Claude, had enslaved the inhabitants. When, in 1742, the estates of these monks became civil property, the prebendaries of Saint-Claude fell heir to them, and the residents of the village now lived in serfdom in various respects.

They were unable to dispose of their property in favor of their children, unless these children had always lived in their father's house and eaten at his table. Otherwise everything became the property of the monks, and the son had to beg at the door of the house his father had built. The monks, though they took the father's property, did not assume his debts.

Anyone who rented a house within the province of the monks, and stayed for one year and one day, remained their serf. It happened that a French merchant, a man with a family, came to this region on business and rented a house for one year. When he died, in a different province of France, his widow and his children were surprised by a visit of the bailiffs, who on the authority of a royal warrant, carted away their furniture, sold it and drove them out of the house.

Voltaire tried first of all to demonstrate that since the right of the monks was based on forged documents, it must be declared invalid; from this, his next step would be to persuade the Crown to abolish serfdom. His demonstration that the tyranny of the prebendaries had no legal foundation was irrefutable; but it made not the slightest dent in the stubborn conservatism of those in the seat of power; his efforts to abolish serfdom were shattered on the rock of the ecclesiastical power.

He spoke not in his own name, but (like Paul Louis Courier a generation later) in the name of the poor inhabitants, and not his name but those of their representatives are signed to his petition.

They were 12,000 poor people, serfs in Longchaumais, Morez, Morbier, Belle-Fontaine, Les Rousses, and Bois d'Amont; for centuries they suffered in silence. Now Voltaire's voice gave them a means of expression but this voice spent itself in vain.

The local chapter of the monastic order was compelled to pay the physician and pharmacist of these slaves. In April, 1770, a surgeon of Morez, by the name of Nicod, asked for his fee, and was answered by the agent of the chapter: "Instead of paying you the chapter should punish you; last year you cured two serfs by whose deaths my clients would have profited a thousand francs."

In half of Franche-Comté which was annexed to France in 1678, the "dead hand" was the ruling principle. The inhabitants were, as they were called, *mainmortables*. When a free man went to live with a wife who was *mainmortable*, he too became a serf. Likewise the other way round, when a woman married a serf. When a father and son were not on good terms and separated so that they lived in different places, or even when they possessed separate property in the same house, the chapter fell heir to their property when they died.

Voltaire wrote in vain: "The ghosts flee when the day dawns; the dead hand should disappear when reason and justice awaken."

Especially well written and effective is his *La voix du Curé*, in which the village priest tells how the prebendaries had robbed a woman, Jeanne Marie Mermet, of her entire inheritance from her father, on the grounds that she had spent her wedding night under her husband's roof.

Here he shows how it had long been known that the whole legend of the proprietary rights of the chapter was based on forged documents, on a large number of brazen lies which were invented in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Voltaire's dramatic gift is visible again in the two petitions of the reverend Father Polycarpe and of a Benedictine monk of Franche-Comté, both of which speak enthusiastically of the existing conditions and praise the benefactions of serfdom, while they quote with horror passages like the following by the historian Mézerei concerning France: "Freedom is so great in this noble monarchy that even the air imparts it to everybody who breathes it. The Majesty of our noble Kings is so high-minded that they refuse to be the rulers of people who are not free."

As Louis XV had remained deaf to all of Voltaire's pleas for the freedom of the serfs, so did Louis XVI after him refuse to interfere, although the number of the serfs had increased.

Voltaire's last petition, in 1777, just a year before his death, is addressed to this King. The *Requête au Roi pour les serfs de Saint-Claude* begins:

"Twenty thousand men, the fathers of families, the men who till the soil of your two Burgoyne Provinces or serve in Your Majesty's army, throw themselves at Your feet. Particularly those of us who are the slaves of various abbeys and monastic orders, thanks to an abuse that is based on forged documents, ask with laments and tears if we may not belong to Your Majesty. We wish to be under Your Crown, whose rights were usurped in the Dark Ages by means of the forgeries of an order of monks."

This last petition went, like all the others, into the waste basket. But before a dozen more years had passed there came a bloody retribution for this disregard of the voice of reason and justice.

16

Among the many cases in which Voltaire, in his last years, raised his voice in defense of those who were accused though innocent, and brutally condemned to death, we must not fail to mention the case of General Lally who was executed in 1766.

In the spring of 1773, his son, the young Count de Lally-Tollendal, approached Voltaire with the request that he help him in securing the re-instatement of his father's honor.

Voltaire had known the General personally, as a close friend of the Duke de Richelieu. He had been painfully surprised by the sentence and the execution of Lally. He found it impossible to believe that he had been guilty of any crime, as he looked up all that had been written on the subject of the General's trial. Even before he knew the details of the case, he wrote to Damilaville, on June 13, 1766:

"As regards Lally, I am absolutely convinced that he was no traitor, and that it was not his fault that he could not hold Pondichêry. The Parliament could not sentence him to death except on a charge of treachery. It would be interesting to know exactly what form of treachery he was found to have committed. France, as I wrote you not long ago, is the only country in which no explanation is furnished for a sentence; also it is the only country in which one can purchase the right to judge his fellow-men."

Count Thomas Arthur de Lally came of an Irish family which had gone to France with James II. He had served in the French army with the greatest distinction. At the outbreak of the Seven Years' War it was feared in France that the English would surprise the French colonies in East India, and troops were sent to support the East Indian Company. These were put under the command of Lally; besides he was given unlimited power over the officials and military forces of the Company. He landed in Pondichéry in April, 1758, and as he heard that the English had taken possession of Chandernagoe, he marched against them, conquered and destroyed Fort St. David, and captured Devicottah. Thirty-eight days after his arrival he had driven all the English from the Coromandel coast.

He had not, however, been sufficiently provided, either with men or money. His main force consisted of entirely undependable natives; he was left without any supplies, while Count d'Aché, the Admiral of the French fleet which was supposed to support him, left him in the lurch time and again, out of jealousy. The directors of the Company in France had asked him to cure the evils that had arisen out of the greed and dishonesty of the officials in India. One can appreciate that his interference earned him the hatred of these officials. They put as many obstacles in the way of his plans and investigations as they could.

Lally, being a man of violent temper, had openly shown the governor Duval de Leyrit his dissatisfaction and had sent complaints about him to the King, because he gave him absolutely no support. The governor, of course, became his mortal enemy. Lally besieged in vain the city of Tanjur, whose Rajah refused to pay the Company the thirteen millions he owed it. He had to retreat to Pondichéry.

Although the fleet refused coöperation, the General found it important to take possession of Madras, and as the East Indian Company at the instigation of the governor refused to grant any money for this, he contributed 156,000 livres from his own pocket. He took possession of all the posts in the vicinity of Arcot that were occupied by the English, and thereafter the city itself.

Now the Marquis de Bussy, who had the command of the Company's troops, declared that he would no longer take orders from Lally. The Royal troops alone remained faithful to him. Nevertheless he marched against Madras and took possession of the so-called black city which was inhabited by merchants of all races. The English withdrew to Fort St. George. But after the victory when Lally's undisciplined troops were drinking, plundering, burning, ravishing and murdering, the English surprised them. Lally, however, succeeded in rallying them, and was even about to cut the English off from this retreat, when Bussy left him in the lurch. Lally tried to storm the fort; but six English war ships, which Count d'Aché had allowed to slip through, arrived so that the siege of St. George had to be given up and a retreat to Pondichéry be made, where lack of money ruined everything.

The troops, not drawing any pay, mutinied; Lally gave everything he possessed to pay them, but it was in vain. In 1760, the English surrounded the city on land and water; in January, 1761, Lally had to surrender, and the bitterness of the population against the bed-ridden General was so great that the English had to protect him from the rage of his country-men. On the boat which brought him as a prisoner to England he was treated by the English very unworthily.

17

In London he heard that his opponents were slandering him to the French Ministry. He asked if he might be excused from his parole and allowed to cross to France to clear himself of these accusations.

Here he found the public predisposed against him. Not only hatred and resentment over their money losses filled his enemies. They felt that it was now a question of either him or them. If Lally should succeed in demonstrating that not he, but his untruthful, unscrupulous subordinates were to blame for the loss of Pondichéry, then the others were in danger of being made one head shorter apiece by the outcome of the trial. Consequently they employed every trick that human meanness fighting for its existence can devise for a man's ruin.

He was accused of having used extortion upon French subjects in India, of misappropriating public funds, and of high treason, and this by judges who knew so little of Indian conditions that they often confused a city with a person and a person with a city. Voltaire justly said that everyone must realize that Lally's voluntary return to France spoke for his innocence. But he was sentenced in advance.

He asked in vain that counsel be assigned to him; his defense was left entirely to himself, regardless of his protest that the question here was not a single matter like murder or theft, but a great number of facts, by the aid of which he wanted to justify his leadership in India and which he could not possibly have at hand without help.

The General wrote a first brief in his defense. To cut off the possibility of his publishing several of these, Pasquier, the presiding judge, speeded up the hearings from four sessions a week to two a day.

The judges did not agree at once; two were for the death sentence, three against it. They wrangled at great length; one of the three finally yielded with the words: "Oh, let him die, then, so we can get the business over with!"

The General was pronounced guilty of having betrayed the interests of the King, of the State and of the Indian Company, of having oppressed the King's subjects in Pondichéry and of having extorted money from them. His property went to the King, who promptly informed the Parliament that he had no intention of exercising his privilege of granting a pardon.

An unsuccessful attempt at suicide was given as the reason for tying Lally's hands behind him as he rode on the rear of a cart to the scaffold. For fear that he might assert his innocence to the crowd, a gag was put in his mouth. The executioner missed the first blow; the head fell at the second. From the enemies of the General, who surrounded the scaffold, came a cry: "Would that he had missed twenty times!"

In the thirty-fourth chapter of the *Précis du siècle de Louis XV* Voltaire had, in 1768, given an account of the trial and execution of Lally, which unequivocally accused the Parliament of judiciary murder. The general resentment called forth by this account made it out of the question for him to think of trying to secure a restitution of the General's honor. Now, in spite of his eighty years and of his weakened health, he put all his strength at the disposal of the son. However, there was small reason to hope that Maupeou who had been one of those to sentence the General to the block, would now be willing to listen to his son. Voltaire therefore told Count Lally-Tollendal that it was of the first importance to assure himself the favor of the Chancellor, and not to attack any one of the still powerful enemies of his father, but merely to justify the deceased.

In April, 1773, the young Count asked Voltaire for his aid. It was in August that the eighty-year-old man sent his friends the first copies of his admirable book *Fragments historiques sur l'Inde et sur le général Lally.*

He was convinced that nobody in France was interested in a man who had been executed seven years ago and whose reputation was still entirely in the power of his enemies. He was convinced that the only practical course was, not to bring a lawsuit, but to publish a literary work which might arouse public interest.

No novel could have been more new and fascinating to French readers of that day; but at the same time, no ethnological treatise could have been more authoritative. Full of spirit and passion, Voltaire refuted the silly fairy tales which were in circulation about the inhabitants of the far East and about their customs.

One has read four big sheets of the book before General Lally gets to Pondichéry. Then his battles and his accomplishments are described, his misfortunes in which he himself is blameless and finally the unjust trial. But as if this had not been what Voltaire was driving at, there follow almost a hundred pages describing Indian conditions, giving information about Indian mythology and the Indian belief in the transmigration of souls, and telling the history of India from Tamerlaine to modern times.

Voltaire made his work a book of entertainment for educated Frenchmen, and at the same time persuaded them, without their noticing it, that Lally's death sentence had been an infamy.

18

From the moment Maupeou dissolved the former Parliament of Paris, Voltaire persisted in the idea that the La Barre trial should be revised by the new Parliament. He learned from a Prussian officer who had visited him in Ferney that the young Gaillard Tollendal had entered the army of Frederick the Great, under the name of Morival, and that he was in Wesel.

At the time he was planning to induce the *philosophes* to settle in Cleve it had been his intention to give Tollendal a position in the colony. Now he started to correspond with him, without revealing his name, and using a Dutch address. Then he strongly recommended him to King Frederick. The King knew, as Voltaire expressed it to Tollendal, that he "had done nothing worse than to laugh in the country of the monkeys and that the monkeys wanted to tear him to pieces for that." The King promoted Morival from a sergeantcy to a commission and promised besides to look after him further.

The sentence made Tollendal civilly a dead man in France; his mother's inheritance had been confiscated. If he were to recover his rights of citizenship he would first have to get a Royal letter of pardon. But to obtain this would require several months of residence in France. Voltaire therefore asked King Frederick for a leave of absence for the young officer so the latter could come to Ferney to talk over the best plan of procedure with his protector.

Frederick found Voltaire's hopes fantastic. King Louis, who had had La Barre executed, could not pardon Tollendal without contradicting himself, because he had been sentenced for the same misdemeanor as La Barre.

In the meantime the young man arrived, in April, 1774, in Ferney. Voltaire was enthusiastic over him. He sent Frederick a glowing description. The more Voltaire thought about the case the more amazed he was at the sentence against Tollendal. He wrote on April 26, 1774, to the King: "There is nothing else against him except that, with his hat on his head, at a distance of 40 paces, and very rapidly, he passed a procession of monks, and that along with several other young men he sang a hundred-year-old obscene ballad." Had Tollendal not required a Royal letter of Pardon to restore his right of inheritance, Voltaire would never have advised him to "humiliate himself so deeply as to apologize to a set of mad barbarians."

Frederick saw more clearly than Voltaire. He knew that satisfaction could never be obtained for Tollendal Morival under that government. He wrote on May 15, 1774, from Potsdam:

"Morival is obliged to you to the highest degree. Without knowing him, you take every pains to make his innocence manifest; in apology for the barbarity of the sentences with which your native land has persecuted one whose offense cannot be given any worse name than frivolity, you have generously tried to protect him. Once more you come forward as the protector of the oppressed, and the avenger of injustice. But despite your good intentions, it is not going to be easy to obtain a pardon for the young man. Regardless of what progress philosophy may make, stupidity and bigotry will always find their roost in the Church, and the name of the Infamy will always remain the trumpet that assembles the feeble-minded and those who have been bitten by the passion to save their neighbor's souls. Naturally, in the land of 'the most Christian King,' every vassal must be most Christian; and never will one be able to avoid making obeissance and kneeling before that lump of dough, which is worshipped as a god. The only way in which Morival could obtain a pardon would be for him to do public penance before a church door, let himself be whipped by monks at the foot of the main altar, and finally become a monk himself."

19

It was not of his own resolution that Louis XV had dissolved the Parliaments. Madame du Barry had been trained to say to the King every time a provincial Parliament sent deputies to him: "Again, people who want to abolish the royal power and who come to dethrone you." A life-size portrait of Charles I of England, by Van Dyck was bought at a cost of 24,000 francs for Madame du Barry, so she could hang it in her apartment where the King would have it daily before his eyes. Again and again she said to Louis: "France! Do you see that picture? If you let your Parliament make decisions, it will one day cut off your head, as the English Parliament did to Charles I."

It harmed the reputation of Maupeou and of the new Parliament that the Chancellor sought support from this woman who drank from the punch spoon and put it back in the bowl. One day, when the King reproached her for making the others drink her spittle, she answered: "Exactly! I want them all to drink my spittle."

In the last days of April, 1774, Louis took a walk with the Countess in the vicinity of Trianon. They saw a little herd-girl, gathering grass for her cow, and they found her eyes exceptionally pretty. They approached her, took off her bonnet, shoved her hair out of her face, and agreed that she would be very attractive if she were dressed as a lady.—"Then let's dress her!"—The little farmer girl, with paint and beauty-patches, was brought before the King. She was charming.—"She shall have supper with us."—They had supper, joked, drank, only too much. The girl was given a bath and put to bed.

Meanwhile her brother died from smallpox; the next day she, too, fell ill and died. An epidemic had broken out in the vicinity.

On April 28 the King did not feel well. The next day he was cupped several times but his headache would not cease. On April 30 it was seen that he was sick with the smallpox. On May 3, after a conference in the evening with the Archbishop of Paris, the King said to Madame du Barry: "Madame, I am ill; I know what I have to do. I want no more such scenes as in Metz. We must separate. Go to Ruel, to the Duke d'Aiguillon. Be assured that I shall always cherish the heartiest friendship for you."

On May 10 Louis died, and this death seemed to Voltaire at first to confirm the pessimism of Frederick. For Louis XVI was as pious as his grandfather and great-grandfather, Louis XV and Louis XIV. But certain traits of tolerance and humanity seemed to crop out at his ascension of the throne. The King appointed Turgot Minister, and when the bigots at Court informed him in horror that Turgot was an encyclopedist, he replied: "Just the same he is an honest man, and that is all I ask."

In the first days of August, 1774, Voltaire took hope again and sent Maupeou another petition for a letter of pardon for Tollendal, asking the Chancellor at the same time not to mention the name of Voltaire, as this would arouse resistance.

But on August 24 Maupeou was overthrown and, what seemed still more disastrous to Voltaire's scheme was the announcement that the new courts were dissolved and the old Parliaments would be reestablished, the Jansenists had convinced the King that the entire population longed for the old Parliaments. On October 2, 1774, an edict was issued which called these back to life.

True, the edict introduced a few limitations of the arbitrary power of the old Parliaments; but these meant nothing, however, beside the insolence with which the parliamentarians again took their seats. Maupeou foresaw the coming revolution when his work was destroyed. He exclaimed: "If the King wants to risk his crown, he is free, of course, to do so." Now the office of judge was again purchasable and the abuse of fees again became customary. Also the abolishing of the torture and the reform of criminal law, which had been looked for at a change of kings, did not take place.

20

Voltaire knew perfectly well that the reëstablished Parliament would oppose his efforts for Tollendal. Nevertheless he was too stubborn to drop the matter. He persuaded the Duchess d'Enville to influence the Minister Maurepas in favor of the innocent man. He induced Frederick to give the young man, through his regimental commander, a splendid reference. As he himself could not take any steps in Paris, whence he was permanently exiled, and as his faithful friend and follower Damilaville as well as his faithless friend Thiriot had died, he asked d'Alembert to do something about the matter. D'Alembert agreed, but was very little fit for it; as Grimm said, d'Alembert was a philanthropist, but he got no pleasure out of it; and consequently, no success.

For fear that he might overlook something that might make trouble later on, Voltaire now wanted to read all documents of the case. The Marquis de Condorcet, later so famous a scholar, secured a complete copy of the documents.

Frederick, who on this occasion was willing to meet every reasonable request of Voltaire, after receiving the outline of the petition that was to be submitted to Louis XVI, ordered his Chancellor to get Prussian scholars of jurisprudence to write an opinion of the case. This was done. But when Voltaire approached the most prominent lawyers in Paris and, without mentioning the injustice of the Parliament, asked a statement that the entire procedure in the La Barre trial had been illegal because the miserable pork merchant Broutel had presided as judge, they all, without exception, declined. They feared, despite all precautions, to arouse the Parliament against themselves. Voltaire wrote to d'Argental:

"The innocently shed blood cries to heaven, and I, too, am crying and shall do so until my death. I implore and conjure you, as a friend of Turgot and of Elie de Beaumont, to tell them that I am overwhelmed with despair. What! Tollendal in the year 1775 is unable to find a lawyer, while in 1766 the young people accused on the same charge with him found eight! This is terrible, incomprehensible. There seems to be neither any reason nor any humanity in the world!"

The lawyers could not be moved. In June, 1775, Voltaire published his pamphlet *Cri du sang innocent,* in which he recommends the case of Tollendal warmly to Louis XVI, and in which he apparently lets the young man speak for himself.

Voltaire's pamphlet is especially interesting in its discussion of evidence. It gives us some idea of the blood-thirsty malice of the judges who sentenced Tollendal. He declares, for instance, that he had never touched the crucifix on the Pont-Neuf in Abbeville, either with a scabbard or with a cane: "I answer not only that the charge is false but that it involves an impossibility. At that time I never carried a cane, but a little switch. The crucifix, as everybody in Abbeville knows, stood very high, on a heavy, eight foot pedestal; it was, therefore, impossible for anyone to reach high enough to strike the figure."

All the guilt of Parliament was wisely put on Duval de Soicourt and Broutel. But neither cleverness nor indignation made any impression upon Louis XVI's dull mind. All the result of this publication, was the pardon of Tollendal thirteen years later, in 1788, the year before the outbreak of the revolution.

21

In spite of the sentence of disgrace which had been imposed on Beaumarchais but never executed, he had during the lifetime of Louis XV and the first years of the reign of Louis XVI enjoyed the extraordinary confidence of both Kings, as their agent abroad. He saw that now the moment for the reinstatement of his honor had come, for he had done more than anyone else to overthrow Maupeou and his new Parliament.

The old Parliament was inclined to criticize the courts recently dissolved, and as Beaumarchais was so clever as to engage Target, the only lawyer who had never been willing to conduct a trial before the Parliament of Maupeou, he won, in September, 1776, the complete restoration of his rights of citizenship.

A similar triumph for one of the unjustly sentenced whose advocate Voltaire had been, was achieved a year and a half later. The most violent opposition of the Parliament had been stirred up by the petition filed with the Conseil for quashing of the death sentence imposed upon General Lally. This petition demonstrated that the General was denied any defense. No less opposition greeted the filing of Lally-Tollendal's well-written memorandum. But the chairman of the Parliament, Pasquier, had been so crushed by Voltaire's *Fragments historiques sur l'Inde* that he humiliated himself by an attempt to justify himself in a letter to the patriarch. The latter answered prudently: "The best we two can do at our age is to forgive"; nevertheless he did not yield an inch from his intention to win the acquittal of the General; he also knew quite well that Pasquier had gone to the greatest trouble to influence the King to refuse the petition. Nothing happened, until the storm Voltaire's personal arrival aroused in Paris in 1778 overwhelmed the Conseil and made further resistance impossible. The hearings had required thirty-two sessions. Finally the Conseil unanimously quashed the judgment against Lally. This took place on May 26. Voltaire lay on his deathbed. He dictated a letter to the Count de Lally-Tollendal, the last lines he wrote:

> The dying man is revived at learning this wonderful piece of news; tenderly, he embraces M. de

Lally; he sees that the King is the protector of justice: now he can die content.

Four days later he was no more.

22

One would fill volumes if one should try to describe everything the eighty-two-year-old man did and wrote in the last years of his life to attain justice for the down-trodden. But anyone can read his *Memorandum for the complete abolition of Serfdom in France,* addressed to Turgot, his other numerous petitions to Turgot to free the county of Gex in his neighborhood from the terrible squeezing to which it was subjected, his protests against the slavery in which the inhabitants of the two valleys of the Jura mountains, Chézeri and Lelex, were held, his attack of the cruel folly of the tax-farming system, the useless crowd of officials it afforded, the injustice which was exercised in the disproportion between tax ability and assessment.

23

Most instructive and valuable is Voltaire's epoch-making book *Prix de la justice et de l'humanité* 1777.

The *Gazette de Berne* of February 15, 1777, had run the following notice: A philanthropist who desires to remain anonymous, has offered the Economic Society of Berne 50 louis d'ors as a prize for the best essay on the jurisdiction of criminal cases; competitors must take three points into consideration: Proportion between crime and penalty, the efficacy of proofs and of surmises, and the best means of facilitating the speedy and fair conviction and punishment or acquittal and release of the suspect on trial, in order that society may enjoy the greatest possible safety, and that freedom and humanity be respected.

Another anonymous donor, Voltaire, added 50 louis d'ors to the premium, but was not content with this.

After only eight months he published the work whose formal intention was a guide for those who wanted to enter the contest; its real importance, however, lay in his annihilating criticism of the French criminal law then in force.

He shows himself surprisingly modern, requests, for instance, oral trial by jury instead of the unexplained judgments by the Parliaments. He abhors the principle of revenge in criminal law. For him it is more important to prevent crimes than to punish them. Regarding the infractions of property laws, he points out that these are committed most frequently by the poor, while the laws are made by the rich, and that it would be better to remove the necessity of begging, than to deliver the beggar to the executioner. As for moral delinquencies, it would be better to protect the lives of the newborn by erecting foundling homes, instead of punishing cruelly the child-murder of the despairing mother.

He enlarges upon the injustice of inflicting the same heavy penalty for minor and graver crimes as when, both he who steals a little money and he who murders for money are broken upon the wheel. This amounts to an invitation to commit the worse crime, as the penalty is the same and the safety far greater, because the murdered man cannot say by whom he was attacked.

The existence of a death penalty for household theft is both barbaric and foolish; the way it works is that the average employer, not being blood-thirsty, is content to discharge the dishonest servant, who is left free immediately to go on stealing somewhere else.

As was to be expected, Voltaire demonstrates most emphatically the idiocy of the belief that the entertaining of so-called heretical notions represented a crime against God and therefore deserved a painful death. Voltaire cites the case of sorcery: more than a hundred thousand witches and sorcerers were condemned to die at the stake, all to no avail; sorcery persisted; but when at last the Christian courts abolished the burning of necromancers, sorcery promptly disappeared. He is shocked when he thinks of the far greater number of executed heretics who were no more guilty than those sorcerers. Europe stands before him an immense scaffold, occupied by executioners and victims, surrounded by judges and spectators.

He explains the folly of a penalty for mere words, either spoken or written. If words do not lead directly to some criminal action, they are nothing more than empty talk. The press and literature should therefore enjoy perfect freedom.

In detail he argues the barbarity of punishing sexual crimes. He finds that abnormal sexual relations between adults are not matters for the courts to judge. To punish them at the stake is medieval. Bigamy, which was punished with such severe penalties, is in several countries no crime at all.

He draws a general distinction between what is really criminal by its own nature, and what is made a crime by conditions and circumstances (as, for instance during a war). During a civil war he who remains true to an unsuccessful king is called a traitor.

When La Barre said that he did not want to worship a god made of dough, he committed a purely local crime. For, England's Chancellor was permitted to say the same in the presence of the entire Parliament, and go free.

Passionately Voltaire attacks the ecclesiastical monitories which were used to force men to become informers by intimidating them with the threat of punishment in the next world. One is threatened with Hell, if one does not want to put one's neighbor's life in danger.

In order that his suggestions should not be rejected as impractical dreams, he proves that they were all actually put in practice in other times and places.

Among the Romans witnesses were questioned publicly and in the presence of the defendant. He could answer them, could question them and could hire a lawyer to represent him in opposing them. "This procedure was noble, free, and breathed Roman great-heartedness."

In England the defendant enjoys the protection of the law. The Englishman, who has the reputation of being harsh, is humane in his jurisprudence, the French, whose customs are considered soft, are really far from humane.

In the section on torture, Voltaire expresses his indignation over the fact that Christian priests and monks employ torture as their last argument. Neither Caligula nor Nero dared to employ it on a Roman citizen; only slaves were tortured, and Quintilian criticized even this, saying that they, too, were people.

Proudly Voltaire points to one happy result of his influence, though without saying one word about his own part in it. In the immense Russian Empire, torture is forbidden. It is abolished in the states reigned over by the Hero of the Century, the King of Prussia and in the countries governed by the Austro-Hungarian Empress-Queen. The just and good landgrave of Hesse has forbidden it. It is not allowed in England.

Voltaire finds one historical instance in which torture was justified: this was Ravaillac, who had murdered Voltaire's hero, Henry IV. In that case it was of importance to learn who his conspirators were.

Thereupon follows the criticism of marriage laws, of the barbaric penalties for adultery committed by the wife, while adultery on the husband's part is regarded as a bagatelle. Voltaire shows how the indissolubility of marrige within the Roman Catholic Church forces to one false vow after another. The good but weak Louis XII swore that his marriage with the daughter of Louis XI had never been consummated, although the couple had lived together for eighteen years. Henry VIII of England had to tell a lie to the nuntii of Pope Clement VII; Henry IV and his wife Marguerite were forced to lie when they wanted to separate.

In the section dealing with criminal evidence, Voltaire demonstrates by historical examples how untrustworthy the witnesses usually are. He cites the case of a nobleman, Langlade, who was sentenced for theft to torture and the galleys, and died as a result of his punishments; the witnesses were two servants who believed they had noticed how both he and his wife trembled at the sight of Count de Montgommeri, before the latter had any idea that he had been robbed. It was not until much later that he complained of the theft. Langlade's innocence became apparent, when it was too late.

Voltaire mentions Madame de Chauvelin, who was accused of having murdered her husband, La Pivardière, in her château. Two maids had witnessed the murder. His own daughter, even, had heard the call of the dying man: "My God, have pity with me!" Several other witnesses had seen the blood-stained linen on the lord of the house, and then the murdered man returned unharmed from a journey.

The work concludes with a tribute to Louis XVI who made the military laws more moderate and abolished the death penalty for deserters, and it concludes with the hope that civil jurisdiction will now follow the example of the military in becoming just at the moment when Voltaire says, peace is reigning over all the earth. Only in North America are there disputes. On July 4, 1776, the revolt of the English colonies began which later led to the formation of the United States of America.

In a presentiment that this almost universal peace was not destined to last long, Voltaire concludes his work:

"Let us make use of these moments! They may be only short."

XIV

DEPARTURE FROM FERNEY

1

VOLTAIRE'S last years in Ferney paved the way for the French Revolution, although he did not wish a revolution.

Even in the field of theology he did not go to extremes. For example, he opposed the *"Système de la nature,"* which he resented as an attack upon the idea of God. For himself, he could not dispense with the deistic concept, and he insisted that society could not dispense with it either, for he considered it the only check upon the murderous instincts of society. Hence the famous line from his poem *Epître à trois imposteurs:*

> Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer

In the memoirs of Mallet du Pan we have the story of a visit of d'Alembert and Condorcet to Ferney. The conversation at table turned to a free discussion of religious matters. In the middle of the dinner, Voltaire sent the waiters from the room, and then said to his two friends and disciples: "Now, gentlemen, you may continue with your objections to God; but as I prefer not to be murdered and plundered by my servants, I would rather they didn't hear what you have to say."

And from the purely scientific point of view he felt repelled by the insolent pretense of some of the later leaders of the Revolution, that they could explain everything in science without a God. It is instructive to see Voltaire and Marat in conflict, and to study the impression the latter made upon him. If one later member of the Convention (Condorcet) was a man after his own heart, another later member of the same body (Marat) was nothing but contemptible in Voltaire's eyes.

In the year 1777 appeared a book, entitled: J. P. Marat: *De l'homme ou des principes et des lois de l'influence de l'âme sur le corps, et du corps sur l'âme,* Voltaire discussed it in his *Journal de politique et de littérature.*

Marat had offended him by stating that all writers before him, who had treated this topic, had produced nothing but pompous talk. "Look at the works of Hume, Voltaire, Bonnet, Racine or Pascal." He indicated that the discussion of such topics demanded a robust constitution, a strong temperament, well-developed and adaptable organs. Without these qualities, whatever the author wrote would be superficial. The physically weak and sensitive never succeeded in penetrating to the bottom of an idea; they became men like Pope or Voltaire, not like Newton and Rousseau.

Voltaire wrote politely, but sharply:

"The author is filled by the noble urge to give all people a definition of themselves and to teach the human race the secrets for which others have sought so long in vain. We may be permitted first of all to remark that such an enlightening genius as his, in setting out upon this mission should be a little more cautious in his treatment of those who have been through it before him. It would have been reasonable and useful to bring out new truths without belittling the truths that had been given us by Buffon, Haller, Lecat, and so many others. . . . And moreover, if the best new thought one has to offer is the theory that the seat of the soul is situated in the cortex of the brain, one should not go swaggering around with such contempt for others and such profound respect for oneself that one angers the reader whom one is trying to please."

And Voltaire concludes his article by showing how frantically anxious Marat is to please his readers: "Everywhere here one sees the Harlequin turning somersaults to please the parterre."

As Voltaire, conservative as he was in many respects, had done more than any other *philosophe* to pave the way for the revolution, it was to him that the revolutionaries paid homage first. After his death he was generally regarded as the father of the French Revolution. But from Marat's reply when Camille Desmoulins reminded him of the way Voltaire had ridiculed him, we can see what a lasting grudge he held against his former critic.

Who knows whether Voltaire, had he lived to 1793, might not have had to put his head on the block!

2

This blending of the aristocratic and the revolutionary in him, won him popularity with the Church as well as with the army.

Even in Rome he was popular. In this age of reason there was once more a Pope who appreciated a joke and who liked Voltaire. Voltaire had taken into his house a poor, half-crippled ex-Jesuit, named Father Adam. Voltaire was fond of playing chess with the old man and had made him his distributor of alms, and had also given him a position in his church.

Father Adam, however, had very little hair on his head and he was much exposed to catching cold in the church, it being strictly forbidden in Roman churches to say the Mass in a wig. Voltaire, aware how easy it would be for Father Adam to succumb to an attack of rheumatism, did not hesitate to write to Rome, asking Cardinal Bernis to secure a special dispensation from the Pope, to allow a member of his household to wear a wig during the Mass. He wrote:

"I do not believe that Clement XIV is another Bembo (a cardinal, a famous Latinist and a keen sceptic); but since you have elected him, undoubtedly he deserves the place you have given him. Sometimes, Monseigneur, those who occupy humble positions are able to do us little favors, and thus the Pope can do one for me. It will cost His Holiness nothing, nor Your Excellency, nor me. The point is, to secure a dispensation to wear a wig."

When the dispensation did not arrive at once, Voltaire felt depressed; but the delay was merely caused by a small mistake in the petition. After some time the message from Rome arrived, and Voltaire rejoiced over it in a humorous rhymed letter to the Cardinal:

Vous abritez sa vieille nuque.
Quand on est couvert de lauriers,
On peut donner une perruque.
Prêtez-moi quelque rime en uque
Pour orner mes vers familiers.
Nous n'avons que celle de d'eunuque.
Ce mot me conviendrait assez;
Mais ce mot est une sottise,
Et les beaux princes de l'Eglise
Pourraient s'en tenir offensés.

The Cardinal did not hesitate to show Voltaire's saucy letter to the Pope and Bernis' answer read thus: "His Holiness was delighted with your joke, and praised your high abilities. If you should ever become a Capuchin, the Pope will be able to like you as much as he respects you."

Voltaire was no less well-liked in the army than in the Church. At the time of the strained relations between France and Geneva, in 1767, when the French army was blockading Geneva in an effort to make it surrender, soldiers were billetted in Voltaire's house. A colonel of Conti's regiment stayed at Ferney, and three companies were quartered in the village. The soldiers were glad to make themselves useful by laying out paths and planting trees. Although Voltaire was too hard at work to show himself much among the grenadiers, he saw to it that they were satisfied. He furnished them not only with food, but also with blankets to protect them from the cold of the night.

One evening, when *Semiramis* was being played in the private theater, Conti's grenadiers took the part of guards in the performance. Voltaire ordered that they be given supper and paid whatever they would ask for their coöperation. One of them replied: "We will not accept any reward. We have seen Voltaire, and that is reward enough." Voltaire, overhearing the reply, exclaimed: "My brave grenadiers!" And he invited them to come as often as they liked to the château to have lunch, and he promised to find profitable employment for any who wished to make himself useful.

It is not an exaggeration to say that, just as Ingres was later on prouder of his violin playing than of his painting, Voltaire was prouder of his ability as a bricklayer, farmer and gardener, than of all his philosophy. These activities were his practical philosophy.

3

Immediately upon his arrival in Ferney, he set about tilling the neglected soil. Anyone who came to him asking for work was given a job. In keeping with his theories of state economy, he regarded farming as the greatest and only inexhaustible source of a country's prosperity. Consequently he went to great expense to secure the best farming implements obtainable. He ploughed and sowed with his own hand like Tolstoi later.

Not long after his arrival he wrote to Haller: "The best thing we can do on this earth is to till it; other experiments are merely children's play beside this activity." He also speaks often of his new seed-drill, which is twice as economical of seed and to which no other can be compared.

In a letter of June 7, 1769, he describes in full detail his conception of the ideal manor and the ideal dairy, and he adds, as though he were building them himself:

"Indeed, there is nothing more beautiful than a large rustic house, in and out of which are going, by four great gateways, carts laden with all the harvest of the country-side. The heavy beams of oak which support the timberwork are placed on pedestals of granite. Long stables stretch out to the right and to the left: fifty cows and their calves are neatly stabled on one side; horses and oxen are on the other. Their food falls into their mangers from huge graineries above. The barns in which grain is threshed are in the middle. And, do you know that all the animals, lodged each in its place in this great edifice, are perfectly well aware that the fodder and oats that are stored there are all theirs by right. To the South are the poultry yards and the sheep-folds; to the North are wine presses, storage rooms and the fruitery; to the East are the dwellings of the overseer and of twenty servants; to the West stretch out the wide fields devoted to pasturage and crops, fertilized by all these animals, the working companions of man.

"The trees in the orchard, loaded with fruit, are another source of wealth. Four or five bee-hives are set up near a little stream which waters this orchard; the bees give the owner an abundant harvest of honey and wax without his bothering himself about all the fables that have been devoted to this busy insect and without wasting his time trying to find out if this nation lives under laws of a so-called queen, who is so well fertilized by her subjects that she produces sixty to eighty thousand young.

"As far as the eye can see are rows of mulberry trees; the leaves nourish those precious worms, which are no less useful than the bees.

"One section of this vast enclosure is cut off by an impenetrable hedge of hawthorn which is pleasant to look at and to smell.

"The court yard and the poultry yards have rather high walls.

"This is what a good farm should be; there are some of this type in the border region in which I live; and I can assert without vanity that mine is a good deal like the one I have just described for you."

There was a field, which was called Monsieur de Voltaire's field, because he would allow no one else to sow or plough there until, in 1772, a seventy-eight-year-old man, he was no longer able to do it himself. As a planter he felt his way by constant experiments, in which, indeed, he was directed by the foremost authorities of the time, as for example the head gardener of the tree nurseries of France, Moreau de la Rochette. Often, of course, his experiments were failures in that severe climate. He writes to his adviser (on June 1, 1767):

"I was unable to overcome the severity of the climate. The comptroller general requested me to plant madder; I tried, but had no success. Furthermore I planted more than 20,000 chestnut trees, which I ordered from Savoy; practically all have died. Four times I have set out nut trees along the main high way; three-fourths of them have either perished or been torn up by the peasants. However, I have not given up, and old and feeble as I am, I shall plant today, even if I have to die tomorrow. Others will profit from it."

Moreau knew from his own experience the disappointments of one who sows or plants. He helped Voltaire zealously. The poet asked him to ship him two hundred elms and one hundred mountain ash; six weeks later he ordered fifty maple trees and an equal number of plane-trees.

One thing which was very little thought about at that time, troubled Voltaire continually: the disappearance of the forests. He was shocked at the indifference of the state, which took no measures to preserve the forests, any more than it did to keep the stock of the studs of domestic animals from degenerating. The emigration of the peasants to the cities, however, strikes Moreau de la Rochette as the gravest menace, and he draws Voltaire's attention to this.

4

Voltaire was not satisfied to be a mere agriculturist, he was ardently interested in doing whatever he could to raise the standard of living for the poor of the district. His first industry had been the manufacture of watches. His second was silk weaving. We have seen that he offered the Duchess of Choiseul a pair of silk stockings which were woven on his estate and which he hoped were worthy of her wearing. The theater in Ferney, which had been turned into a storeroom for linen, became the silkworm house. On September 4, 1769, he writes to the Duchess of Choiseul the following letter:

"It is from my own silkworms that I have the material for these stockings; it is with my own hands that, with the help of the son of Calas, they were made on my place; these are the first stockings that have ever been made in this country.

"Be so kind as to put them on, Madame, just one time; then show your legs to whomever you please; and if it is not admitted that my silk is stronger and more beautiful than that of Provence or Italy, I shall give up the manufacture."

Watch-making, of course, was the chief industry, as all the apprentices coming from Geneva were highly skilled workmen, probably the best watchmakers in the world. He built houses for them, and we have seen how he tried to create markets for them in Spain and Italy. Catherine II bought and recommended the watches of his workers. If the Empress succeeded in conquering Constantinople, he was ready and determined to supply watches to all members of the Greek Church there. As the conquest was too long in coming, he did not wait for it, but sent a load of watches to Constantinople by the aid of the French ambassador in Turkey. These watches, he says, are real works of art, all the workmanship of fine goldsmiths, and his price was one-third of what they would cost in Geneva.

He even asked d'Argental to try to get the Duke of Praslin to send consignments of watches to the Dey and his army in Algiers and to the Bey and his army in Tunis.

No wonder that these people showed their gratitude. It became a habit to call Ferney by a new name, "Ferney-Voltaire," or just "Voltaire"; Maurepas, however, refused to grant a petition to change the name officially. After Voltaire's death his name was officially suppressed and everything was done to eradicate every trace of his activity in Ferney. Not until the Revolution were the two names Voltaire and Ferney coupled together again.

But as long as he lived the inhabitants felt strongly what a protector they had in him. One day he appeared in person at a meeting of the landowners in order to accomplish something definite in his fight for the county of Gex. The result was that it was unanimously voted to favor the efforts that were being made to lighten the tax burden on the population. When he left the hall the populace shouted: *"Vive le roi! Vive Voltaire!"* The horses before his coach were decorated with flowers and the coach itself was filled with laurel and flowers. In formal procession the people followed him on horseback and on foot to Ferney. In all the villages through which he passed, the same enthusiasm, the same conferring of laurel wreaths.

5

Among the inhabitants of that region was a poor aristocratic family by the name of Crassy, to whom Voltaire had some time before lent 15,000 livres to recover their property, of which the Jesuits in Ornex had taken possession. Since then the Crassy family had been a constant guest at Ferney.

In 1775 they introduced to Voltaire another poor aristocratic family by the name of Varicourt. One of them was a young handsome priest, whose career Voltaire assured through Madame de Saint-Julien, so that later, in the nineteenth century, he became Bishop of Orléans. He had a young sister, Reine Philiberte de Varicourt, who because of her poverty was planning to enter a nunnery, as it was incredible that anyone would marry her without a dowry, pretty and attractive as the eighteen-year-old girl was.

Voltaire who long before had found a good, suitable husband for Mademoiselle Corneille, and another for her sister-in-law, Mademoiselle Dupuits, would not hear of the charming young girl's becoming a nun. With the permission of her family he adopted her as his daughter, and in his house she was known only as *Belle et Bonne,* the pretty and good. Later, during his visit to Paris, and still later when during the Revolution homage was done to his sarcophagus, *Belle et Bonne* was regarded almost as a daughter who represented him. At the formal ceremony in honor of Voltaire, she was, also, in the procession and carried a basket holding two white pigeons with pink bills. This sight was so lovely that everybody was moved, and Voltaire was upset when somebody slaughtered the two pigeons.

With her beauty, her charm, her dainty bearing and the joyful exuberance of her youth, Reine de Varicourt became the pride of the house in Ferney. It was a lovely sight to see with what heartiness Voltaire kissed her hand. He found a marriage for her in November, 1777.

The bridegroom was the young Marquis de Villette, who, like many others, falsely flattered himself that he was an illegitimate son of Voltaire, simply because the latter had known his somewhat frivolous mother. He was a young man whom Voltaire turned from a life of many vices and excesses. He fell madly in love with Reine de Varicourt, and wished no dowry as he himself had a yearly income of one hundred and fifty thousand francs. He became a good husband for Voltaire's adopted daughter and remained a sincere and devoted, even though a little loud, admirer of the patriarch.

Voltaire seems to have had a variety of interests to compensate him for his stay in the lonely mountain valley.

He was, however, not reconciled to his exile. On the contrary, with the passing of years, when he became a very aged man, his impatience to see France and Paris, increased so that the idea never left his mind.

6

On January 2, 1778, *Irène,* Voltaire's tragedy written at the age of eighty-four, was accepted unanimously by the actors of the Comédie Française. La Harpe, for whom Voltaire had shown the same consideration as if he had been his own son, withdrew his own previously accepted play, *Les Barmécides,* in spite of the master's protest, not to delay the performance of Irène.

Nicolas Barthe did the same thing.

Barthe's letter to the actors reads:

"Gentlemen: A new play by Monsieur de Voltaire has been read to you; you were on the point of considering *L'Homme personnel.* Now there is only one thing for you to do, not to think of my play any longer. I am aware that new plays are performed in the order in which they are accepted, and that this is the prescribed procedure. But what writer would dare to call upon the rule in a case like this! Monsieur de Voltaire stands above the law like a king. If I am not to have the honor of making my contribution to the pleasure of the public, the least I can do is not to stand in the way of the public delight that will surely be occasioned by a new drama from the pen that created *Zaïre and Merope.* I hope you will stage this play as soon as possible. And may its author, like Sophocles, continue to write tragedies until he is a hundred years old, and may he die as you, Messieurs, live—flooded with applause."

His desire to see this fickle Paris once more did not diminish. He had to abandon the hope that he would be called back, but he said to himself: "What have I to fear?" He had not been expelled. There was no express prohibition that excluded him from Paris.

His impatience was fed by his niece, the dull Madame Denis, who had enough of Ferney and was longing for the capital. Voltaire's friends in Paris, d'Argental and Thibouville, did everything in their power to pave the way for him, while the Marquis de Villette and his pretty young wife daily tried to persuade Voltaire that the whole effect of his tragedy would be lost if he were not present in person for its opening.

Finally the trip was decided upon. Madame Denis and the Marquis and his wife traveled ahead. They were all to be the guests of Belle-et-Bonne. It was a difficult parting for Voltaire's colony. Grief and terror could be discerned in the faces of the populace. They had a presentiment that they would probably never see him again and that all their prosperity and happiness would leave with him. Those who had come to wish him a pleasant journey could scarcely speak for their tears. There were tears in his own eyes.

On February 5, 1778, before he entered his coach, with his secretary and his cook, he promised soothingly that he would be back inside of six weeks. He was so sincere in this belief that he did not put his manuscripts and papers in order before his departure. In spite of his age and sickliness, he still felt strength. He was little given to thinking about his death, still less about his immortality.

Death and immortality were two things of which he was sure enough.

XV

TRIUMPH AND DEATH

1

From Ferney they went to Nantua, where they had made preparations for spending the first night. When they halted at Bourg-en-Bresse to change the horses, Voltaire was recognized and the entire city gathered around his coach. The post-master, noticing that the post-boy, from force of habit, had hitched a bad horse to the coach, had another excellent horse brought out, and said with a vivid oath: "Go ahead, and if you drive my horses to pieces, I do not care, you are driving Monsieur de Voltaire, don't forget that!" The people laughed and applauded. Voltaire also had to laugh although the incognito which he had aimed to keep during the journey was betrayed.

Passing Sanecy, on the third day they reached Dijon where Voltaire had business to transact for his niece. He stopped at the Hôtel de la Croix d'Or.

The prominent men of the city came to call upon him. Curious people bribed the maids of the hotel to leave the door of his room open, so that they could have a look at him. Young people disguised themselves as waiters at the hotel in order to serve at his table and have the pleasure of seeing him. In the evening, there was a serenade under his window.

The next night he was in Joigny, and arrived the next day in Paris. But a mile outside of Moret, the coach axle broke and a post-boy was sent ahead in a hurry. The Marquis de Villette rode out in his coach and took the patriarch into his own coach. Voltaire wished no longer to ride as fast as before. He ordered his secretary to tell the postillions that they were driving a poor man who was supposed to be operated on in Paris.

On February 10 they arrived. At the outskirts of the city, the officials asked whether there was anything in the coach that was in contradiction to the orders of the King. “Gentlemen,” answered Voltaire, “I do not believe that there is any other contraband than myself.” One of the guards said to his comrades: “God help me, this is Monsieur de Voltaire.” He tugged at the coat of the one who was attending to the coach and repeated the same thing, so that Wagnière began to laugh. Then all, with admiration and respect, looked at the people in the coach and asked Monsieur de Voltaire to continue his journey.

During the last days, the long-exiled man had been as though electrified at the thought that he would see Paris again, after almost a generation. At every stop he wanted to get the good Wagnière drunk, “so he would once in his life learn how it felt.” He sat in the coach and read or thought, or told a hundred comic stories.

2

The coach stopped before the house of the Marquis de Villette, the pretty building in the Rue de Beaune where Voltaire had lived in his youth with Thiriot, in the apartment of Madame de Bernières. But immediately upon his arrival he set out to call upon his old friend, his dear angel, d’Argental. The latter was not at home. Voltaire, however, scarcely had returned to Villette’s when the friend of his youth arrived. The two men who had been united by such a hearty friendship, but who had been separated by circumstances for so long a time, saw each other again at the age of eighty years.

A crowd of friends started to flood the room, and from that moment the stream never ceased. He who, in Ferney, had been used to living as he pleased, who made himself inaccessible to all visitors and simply let them go away without having accomplished anything except being asked to dine with Madame Denis, now denied himself to nobody, and was so careless as to receive this crowd of curious people and to have a friendly and courteous word for everyone. Especially the many whom his good memory enable him to recognize after almost thirty years, went away delighted.

But immediately the unpleasant visitors, too, began to arrive. The Court and the Church were announced.

First the Marquis de Jaucourt arrived, to inform Madame Denis that Versailles was astonished at the arrival of her uncle. The ill-humor occasioned by this was great. But M. Jules de Pelignac, an intimate friend of the Queen, succeeded in smoothing the angry waves.

Next came the priests, one after another, to convert the sinner and to administer the sacrament to him, who was soon going to die. The priest of Saint-Sulpice visited him several times in vain; and an ex-Jesuit called Abbé Gaultier wrote a friendly letter, was admitted, and bored Voltaire. Several days later, disguised in worldly clothes, came the Abbé Marthe. As soon as he was alone with Voltaire, he said: "Confess at once to me! No hesitation! Hurry up!" And he kneeled near his bed. He was only removed when Wagnière came in.

Tronchin, Voltaire's former physician in Geneva, who had lived now for ten years in Paris, at once sent him a bitter letter in which he reproached him for his silence. As a physician, he was very displeased that Voltaire, at his great age, should have exposed himself to the extraordinary fatigues which would be the inevitable result of his stay in Paris after so long an absence. Voltaire's presence in the capital was taken as such an event that everything else, politics, rumors of war, intrigues of the Parliament, gossip at Court, the fight between the followers of Gluck and Piccini, was forgotten.

3

The day after his arrival the Academy sent a deputation to greet him. It consisted of three members, the Prince of Beauveau, the Marquis of Saint-Lambert and Jean François Marmontel. They started at once to talk of a public session of the Academy in his honor, a thing which had never happened before.

On February 14 a deputation from the Theatre arrived, headed by a handsome actor named Bellecour and the famous Madame Vestris. Bellecour delivered a speech. Voltaire answered the actor: "From now on I can live only for you and with you."

La Harpe, who was one of the first to arrive at the house of the man whom he then regarded as his intellectual father, wrote about him: "I had not seen him for ten years and I found him neither changed nor aged. He read us the fifth act of his tragedy; he is still full of life, his wit has neither decreased nor has his memory weakened."

Then the usually very haughty Gluck arrived and introduced himself. Two hours after Gluck, Piccini arrived to make his call. Madame Necker, the wife of the Minister, who had originated the idea of having a statue of Voltaire made by Pigalle, was one of his most heartily received visitors. She was not especially pleased that her darling Varicourt had married Villette, who was known to have an unsavory reputation, and she was one of those who did not like to see Voltaire staying in the home of Villette. But she forgot her indignation when she saw Belle-et-Bonne.

Dr. Franklin came with his nephew whom he led at his hand. Voltaire answered in English when America's great citizen paid his homage. Madame Denis complained that she and the others present could not understand what was said. "I could not refrain from indulging myself in the vain satisfaction of speaking the same language as Dr. Franklin." The two men embraced, deeply moved.

Voltaire had given the actors his promise to attend the performance of Corneille's *Héraclius;* he had, however, rather hoped to see *Cinna.* They politely met his wishes and changed the performance. But when the day arrived, Voltaire had such bad pains in his lower abdomen that Tronchin prescribed absolute rest.

His opinion was that Voltaire should, for some time, receive nobody; but the hosts of visitors who tried in vain to see him at the theater or in other public places caused the prescription of the physician to be disregarded.

As Tronchin wrote in vain: "Voltaire is living now on his principal rather than his interest, and his strength would soon be exhausted by such a way of living." This note of Tronchin to the Marquis de Villette was published in the *Journal de Paris* of February 19, apparently with the intention of requesting the public of Paris to give the hero of the day a rest; but after February 19, Voltaire has resumed his regular mode of life in Paris; the pains had disappeared; he felt physically and mentally fit and took no care of himself.

His first thought was the performance of *Irène* and the distribution of the rôles. The Marshal of Richelieu visited him and discussed this difficult question. The two friends of youth were now marked by their age. An anonymous journalist of that time wrote: "It was a strange spectacle to observe these two old men. They are approximately of the same age, the Duke a little younger; but despite his distinguished appearance and his choice clothes, he seemed more worn out than Monsieur de Voltaire in night cap and dressing-gown." The Marshal who was interested in an actress, Madame Molé, asked Voltaire to let her take the part of Zoe, the confident of Irène. Voltaire writes jestingly: "He assured me that Madame Molé would not necessarily be unbearable in that rôle," and he promised Richelieu to give the young lady that part. When he meanwhile heard that Mademoiselle Sainval would be better suited for the part, he wrote several skillful and flattering letters to Richelieu and to Monsieur and Madame Molé, telling them that he had found it necessary to change his decision.

4

Finally, public opinion incarnate came to greet Voltaire—in the shape of the more than eighty-year-old Madame du Deffand. The old Marquise was as blind as Justice and as witty as Malice. Voltaire had been corresponding with her since 1732. He had known her at the time of the Regency, when she was a Court beauty and the Regent, among many others, was her lover. He had followed her career during the forty years of her relations with President Hénault. He knew the astonishing and moving passion with which the then eighty-year-old blind lady was seized for Horace Walpole, whom she never saw, but in whom she encountered the English type which was entirely new to her. Voltaire knew perfectly well that she lavished all the tenderness of which she was capable upon this friend, and that she, whose temper was satirical and whose affections were as cool as her senses were cold, was always writing something nasty about his philosophical friends to Walpole, who with the passing years grew to hate them more and more. She shared the opinions of the *philosophes* but insinuated herself into Walpole's good graces by showing contempt for them.

D'Alembert had informed Voltaire (through Mademoiselle de Lespinasse) what a faithless friend the Marquise was to him; with what pleasure she circulated everything malicious that Fréron wrote against him, while at the same time she was sending him the most friendly letters, even pretending to treat him as a confidant; she complained bitterly to him, for instance, that the ungrateful President Hénault had not left her anything in his will.

He had written nine weeks ago to Madame du Deffand in regard to Catherine II:

"Her son loves her; her people love her; her Court worships her; she sent me a portrait of her pretty face framed by twenty big diamonds, also the prettiest furs of the north, and a law book which is as admirable as our French jurisprudence is shocking. Allow me, therefore, my honest devotion for a state which has 2000 miles in circumference and where I am liked, whereas I am not exactly too well treated in the little part of Western Europe in which by the will of fate I was born."

Nearly a generation before, in a letter of August 14, 1749, Voltaire had written to Hénault: "Madame du Deffand, how highly I esteem her. It is my intention to pay court to her when I get to Paris." Now he was there, and it was she who called upon him. It is very interesting to follow up in her letters to Walpole the first impression Voltaire made at this time upon this woman who was the center of the high society of Paris. Voltaire had scarcely arrived when he sent her this note: "I arrive here dead tired, and want to arise from the dead only that I may hurl myself upon my knees before the Marquise du Deffand."

On February 12, 1778, she writes: "Yesterday Voltaire received three hundred persons. I shall be very cautious about getting into this crowd. All Parnassus was there, from the bottom to the top. He will not be able to stand the strain; he may die before I get a chance to see him." A little later in February she writes:

"All the actors are going to his house to rehearse for *Irène* these days. He invited me, but between eleven and twelve, when I am frequently just beginning to get up; it is therefore doubtful if I can go there. He showed me the greatest friendship and great joy when he saw me. This joy was mutual. Yesterday, it was said he could digest nothing. His indescribable vivacity is wearing him out. I should not be surprised if he were to die soon."

On February 22 the Marquise again writes to Walpole about Voltaire. She had been to his house again; she wants to prove that she cared very little about visiting him.

"I have told you about my first visit to Voltaire. That took place on the 14th. He had arrived on the tenth, and of all his acquaintances I was the one who was in the least hurry to visit him. I wanted to get him alone, that is, with the Prince of Beauveau. Yesterday I made my second visit, again with Monsieur de Beauveau but this was not as pleasant as the first. First we went through several rooms in which the windows stood open. We were received by the niece Denis (the best woman in the world but exceedingly shallow), by Monsieur de Villette and by his young wife who is said to be pleasant. She is called 'La Belle et Bonne' by Voltaire and his followers. When we entered the living room, we did not find Voltaire there; he had locked himself into a room with his secretary. The Prince, who was in a hurry, said good-bye, and I remained with the niece, the Marquis Massarille and Belle-et-Bonne. They told me that Voltaire was half dead from exertion; in the afternoon he had read his whole play to the actors. I wanted to go away; but I was asked to stay, and Voltaire, in order to make me wait quietly, sent me several verses written to Pigalle, who is to make a statue of him. After I had waited for a good quarter of an hour, Voltaire came and said that he was so dead tired he could not open his mouth. I wanted to leave him alone, he held me back; he spoke to me about his play, invited me again to come to the main rehearsal which was to be held at his house. He wanted to tell me all about the most minute details. That is all he thinks about; that is why he came to Paris; it will send him to his grave if it does not become a great success. But everybody has sworn to make it that."

Then she informs Walpole of what Voltaire has told her about all the priests who bothered him.

5

On February 25, Voltaire lay in his bed as usual, dictating a letter to his secretary, when he had to cough very violently. "I have a hemorrhage," he exclaimed and the blood gushed from his mouth and nose.

Voltaire's first thought was not to send for Tronchin but for the Abbé Gaultier, as he was continually afraid that his body would be refused burial. Wagnière, who did not like to let the priest enter, pretended to go, and assured him that he had not found the Abbé at home. Voltaire said to those present: "Gentlemen, you at least are witnesses that I have wished to do what is called the duty of a dying man." Tronchin came and ordered that strange but customary panacea of blood-letting. After about three cups of blood had been taken from him, the hemorrhage decreased; but in decreasing violence it kept up for twenty-two days. A young nurse was employed who, despite the weakness of Villette, kept all the curious and meddling people from Voltaire.

On March 2 the Abbé called again and was received. Voltaire asked him to hear a confession "before his death." According to the statement of Wagnière, he said bluntly, "Several days ago I asked you to come about this matter as you know. If you are content, we will regulate this little matter now." The Abbé answered that he would gladly hear Voltaire's confession, but that first a refutation of the contents of his writings was absolutely necessary. Voltaire said that he would do everything necessary, sent everyone away and remained alone with the Abbé.

Three days before, at the request of Wagnière that he give him some means of refuting the charges by which Voltaire's enemies would dishonor his memory, he had asked for a piece of paper, and he wrote the following lines:

"I am dying in the worship of God, loving my friends, without hatred of my enemies and with contempt of superstition.

February 28, 1778 Voltaire."

He asked the Abbé to have the "recantation"—which was none, but only the creed of a deist—published in the newspapers of Paris. The Abbé replied that there was no hurry, he had to find out first if his superiors were satisfied with this "recantation."

He took it to the Archbishop of Paris, who declared it as not sufficient. Thereafter, he went with it to his next superior, the parish priest of Saint-Sulpice, whom he at the same time gave 600 livres for the poor of the parish, and this man gave him the same unfavorable answer.

Therefore, the Abbé came again to get a confession which would better satisfy the ecclesiastical demands. Voltaire wrote now according to tradition "to secure peace," the following statement:

"The undersigned states that for the last four months he has suffered from hemorrhages and that at his age of eighty-four years he was unable to drag himself to a church. As the parish priest of Saint-Sulpice has added to his other good deeds the kindness of sending the Abbé Gaultier to me, I have confessed to him and I am now dying in the Catholic faith in which I was born, and I hope that God in his

mercy will consider me worthy of forgiving me all my faults and if I have ever offended the Church, I ask God and It forgiveness.
March 2, 1778, in the house of Marquis de Villette.
Voltaire."

Now the Abbé was to give Voltaire the sacrament, but the latter declined, answering: "Monsieur Abbé, remember that I am having one hemorrhage after another, and have to be very careful not to mix the blood of God with mine."

The parish priest of Saint-Sulpice received the Abbé Gaultier very ungraciously, when the latter returned with signed statement which gave as little security of orthodoxy as the first. When the Abbé returned to the Rue de Beaune, he was told that Monsieur de Voltaire was unable to receive him.

On the same day on which Voltaire had confessed, La Harpe came to him in the name of the French Academy to inquire of his health, and informed him of the resolution of the Academy to send at every session a messenger to ask about his health as long as he was ill. "I have," Voltaire answered, "thought that I could not show myself grateful for the courteousness of the Academy in a better way than fulfilling my religious obligations, in order to win the right to a Christian burial in consecrated soil and a Mass of the Franciscan friars." For it was the custom of the Academy to have a Mass read in the monastery of the Franciscans for every member it lost.

When Voltaire's Paris physician, Lorry, smiled satirically at his confession, the patient answered: "I do not want to be thrown into the carrion pit. These priests annoy me and bore me, but they have me in their hands! I am forced to free myself from this difficulty. As soon as I can I shall depart. The fanatic zeal of these priests cannot follow me to Ferney. Had I stayed there this would not have happened." Of course, Voltaire's confession was interpreted as a denial of all of his life's work. The zealous Horace Walpole made this his point in a letter to Madame du Deffand. But she was reasonable enough to answer him: "You judge his motives for this attitude wrongly; he would be offended if it were thought that he had changed his way of thinking; everything that he has done is out of consideration for decorum 'pour le décorum' and in order to be left alone." Walpole as an Englishman found it difficult to imagine himself among the conditions and ceremonies of France, that would necessitate such a thing. If, for instance, a French Protestant did not want his wife to be regarded a concubine and his children illegitimate, he was forced to submit to the Catholic ritual. In France there was only one form of religion, which was represented by the very powerful priests. It took hold upon the individual when he was born and did not let go before his last breath.

6

To the general surprise the patient convalesced. His strong constitution even at his advanced age overcame a serious illness. On March 2, Madame du Deffand wrote to Walpole: "Yesterday I heard through d'Argental, who goes twice a day to look after Voltaire, that Tronchin believes him cured. He has no fever, he is not weak; though he still has hemorrhages; it is the general conviction that he recover. I shall, perhaps, visit him today."

As soon as Voltaire felt well again, he could not help turning his attention to Versailles. He was *gentilhomme ordinaire du Roi* and only the helpless condition in which he had been could excuse him for not having yet asked an audience with the King and the Queen.

He knew nothing of what an unbreakable circle the Clergy had closed around Louis XVI, and that the priests would describe it as a triumph of godlessness if the King should receive the author of the *Dictionnaire Philosophique.*

But as it seemed as if there were no limits to the enthusiasm with which Paris paid homage to Voltaire, or to the honors that were conferred upon him every day, several of the people at Court took the liberty of hinting to the Queen that it was not wise to show a marked difference between the sentiment of the Court and that of the population. It had been proposed to give Voltaire a seat at the Théâtre Français, to pay him the same honor that Corneille and Racine had enjoyed. Marie Antoinette preferred to let him have a loge in the same section as her own, so that she could speak with him every evening. But when the King heard that the Queen mentioned Voltaire, he said: "True, Madame, Voltaire is in Paris; but it is not with my permission!"—"But, Sire," she answered, "he has never been exiled."—"That may be; but I know what I am talking about!"

It was pointed out to Marie Antoinette that if Voltaire was not received in regular audience, the Queen might still see him in the large reception room at the palace. She thought of asking his advice and also thought of what else she should talk about with him. She was advised to talk exclusively about his poetic works. But she wanted first to assure herself of the consent of the King and the next day she answered that it was final that Voltaire should not come in contact with any member of the Royal Family. The King showed his indulgence by not taking any notice of his presence in Paris.

Although Tronchin predicted an inevitable relapse if Voltaire should resume his normal mode of life, he started in at once to rewrite his tragedy, dictated numerous letters and received curious visitors by the hundreds, among them all who were able to hold a pen.

Many prepared at home the polite phrases with which to address him. A translator of Ovid by the name of Farian de Saint-Ange said to Voltaire: "Today I have come prepared only to greet Homer; another time I shall greet Sophocles and Euripides, then Tacitus, then Lucian."—"My dear man," the sarcastic poet answered, "I am, as you see, a rather old man; could you not make those visits all in one?"—

Among those who appeared there was a female impersonator, if she were not a woman, the Chevalier d'Eon, a mysterious adventurer who generally passed as a man but who had appeared in woman's attire at the Court of Queen Elizabeth whose reader she had been. When she was announced, the servants and those present gathered so suddenly to see her that she felt embarrassed and hid her face in her muff; she confined herself to exchanging a few polite words with the man with whom she had wished to get acquainted.

7

When on March 10, a rehearsal of *Irène* was held in the hall of the Marquis de Villette, Voltaire was too weak to attend it. During the night he had been coughing and Tronchin had ordered him to rest absolutely; now the physician was relentless when it came to giving him permission to attend the first performance of his tragedy, although neither the actors nor the Parisians could imagine this performance without him. Against all expectations, he himself seemed to have very little desire to see it; the actors had disappointed him; he found them mediocre and unintelligent; they never wanted to take his advice.

Madame Vestris, who was to play the main part, despite her fine talents, lacked *"le diable au corps,"* which for Voltaire was the fundamental requirement for the art of acting.

For several days he felt crushed; he seemed to have aged years. He no longer wished to listen to anybody except about his play; he seemed stupefied. As nothing seemed to make any impression on him, he was shown a number of satires which had been written against *Irène;* but he, who had always been so easily upset, returned them to Villette without saying a word.

In the meantime, the papers were full of verses and poems of all sorts in his honor.

Voltaire's many opponents, of course, did not remain idle during this shower of bouquets. They sent epigrams and satires of all kinds to his house. He said: "In Ferney I was sent such piggishnesses every week and I had to pay postage for them; here, it costs me nothing."

Voltaire's health improved somewhat, but he still had hemorrhages and was very depressed.

Never had a performance at the Théâtre Français been awaited as anxiously as the première of *Irène*. The crowd was so immense that the hall was filled in a moment. The Queen with her Court, and the Count and the Countess de Bourbon, the Count d'Artois, all of Versailles with the exception of the King, were present. Marie Antoinette sat with a pencil in her hand and wrote down the verses she liked best; probably the verses which were of a solemn and religious character, to give them to her husband so that he should have a better opinion of the poet of the play. But that evening those verses which contained attacks on the clergy earned the greatest applause.

When toward the end of the play success was sure beyond a doubt, Voltaire was quickly informed. He answered: "This is one consolation for me, but it does not make me well."

The next day he was again less well.

At the second performance of *Irène,* the spectators asked the actors on the stage how the poet of the tragedy was. Monvel answered: "Monsieur de Voltaire's health is not as we would like it to be, for the joy of the public and to our own interest." The next day, however, the *Journal de Paris* reported that the illness of the poet would have no after-effects, and as a matter of fact he did soon recover.

With the same gaiety as before he again opened his house to everyone who wanted to see him. The Academy at once sent a deputation which congratulated him on the success of *Irène,* and in gratitude he dedicated his play to the Academy.

8

Voltaire seemed to have become well, even young again. He was ambitious, impatient, active, went out on foot and rode in his coach to call upon his friends. When his horses went slowly through the Place Louis XV, now the Place de la Concorde, which he had never seen, he was recognized and a crowd of curious people and admirers surrounded his coach and escorted him to his home.

On returning there he was greeted by a deputation of the Freemason's lodge "Nine Sisters," which consisted of forty masons with their officers at their head. They informed him that on March 10 his health had been drunk at the lodge and songs had been sung in his honor. Even though he was not a Mason, he belonged to the lodge because of his love of the human race and because of his hatred of cruelty and fanaticism. The lodge consisted chiefly of writers and artists, and Voltaire said a courteous word to everyone. With his keen memory he remembered the circumstances under which each one had become known to him.

Voltaire had become the center of Paris. In the Place Louis Quinze Wagnière heard a poor mountebank who was doing card tricks, say to those who stood around him: "These card tricks, ladies and gentlemen, I learned in Ferney from the great man who is now turning Paris upside down, Monsieur de Voltaire, *notre maître à tous.*"

On March 30 the patient was finally well enough to ride to the theater and see his play. But first he wanted to call upon the French Academy.

His coach made the greatest efforts to force its way through the populace who had quickly gathered and filled the air with their chorus of homage. The crowd was so vast that a young man, the Count of Montlosier, was raised by it and thrown against Voltaire's shoulder so that he became dusty from the powder of Voltaire's wig before he fell down again.

In the meantime two thousand people had come to the Louvre. They applauded and called "Vive Monsieur de Voltaire!" The Academy for the first and only time disregarded their custom and went to meet him in the entrance hall, which had never been done before, even when one of the Princes of the Blood came to visit. Only the clerical members, with one exception, remained at home. Voltaire was asked to take the chair of the director, and was unanimously elected honorary director for the next year.

In this session d'Alembert delivered his *Eulogy of Despréaux* which was a great success. He interwove a hint about the great colleague the Academy saw in their midst after twenty-eight years. After comparing the style of Boileau with that of Racine, he characterized the three masters, Despréaux, Racine and Voltaire: "I am naming the last although he still is alive; for why should we renounce the joy of putting a great man in the place which posterity will accord him whether we do or not?"

After the session again the coach had to make great efforts to get through the curious crowd which in the meantime had increased immensely. People of every profession and degree, people old and young, common men and noblemen, savoyards, vegetable hucksters, little children—all these in a great chorus cried, clamored, called: *"Vive Voltaire!"* while they applauded like crazy people and pressed about the coach all the way to the theater.

The coach had scarcely come to a stop when everybody tried to climb up on its wheels to see the great man close at hand.

Wagnière says that a gentleman jumped on the running board of the coach and asked Voltaire for permission to kiss his hand. When he got Madame de Villette's hand instead, he exclaimed naively: "Truly, this is a very fresh and full hand for a man of eighty-four years."—The ladies were assiduous in their attentions; at every step Voltaire made, they applauded him and stopped him to observe him better. For keepsakes, they tore little pieces from the sable fur which Catherine had given him.

9

When he showed himself in the theater, loud calls were heard and the entire orchestra stamped applause. His seat was in the loge which was reserved for the chamberlains of the King. There, Madame Denis and the Marquise de Villette had already taken their seats. He wanted to sit behind them, but the calls of the audience forced him to take his seat between them.

"The wreath!" exclaimed everyone, and at the same moment the actor Brizard entered the loge and put a laurel wreath on Voltaire's head. With a modest gesture he took it off and put it on the head of the young Marquise, his pretty and good foster-daughter. But the public demanded loudly that he himself should wear it, which resulted in Prince Beauveau putting it on the head for which it was intended.

Grimm, an eye-witness, writes:

"All the ladies had risen. All the actors stood at the edge of the stage before the curtain went up, and looked at Voltaire. The people crowded at the entrance to the parterre, where several ladies had descended as they otherwise could find no more seats from which they could get a glimpse of the object of the general adoration. The entire hall was obscured by the dust that rose from the crowd which surged up and down. This enthusiasm, this general delirium, lasted more than twenty minutes; it was not without great efforts that the actors were finally able to start the performance."

Irène was being played for the sixth time. But, except for Voltaire, no one had come to see the tragedy. Nobody listened, and when the curtain went down after the last act, the rage of applauding and stamping began anew, and Voltaire was forced to address a few words to the roaring, trembling crowd. The storm seemed to have no end, when after some time the curtain rose again.

The actors had been forgotten in the general enthusiasm, and besides they were filled with gratitude to the man, who for half a century, had been the mainstay of their theater; they had hastily thought up something they could do to show that they shared the passion that was raging in the hall. Mademoiselle La Chassaigne had the idea that Voltaire's bust should be wreathed.

Only a short time ago it had been put up in the foyer of the theater; it and its pedestal were brought and put in the middle of the stage. What followed now was improvised, but it could have made no stronger effect had it been planned weeks in advance. All the actors and actresses stood in a semicircle around the bust, with palm leaves and flower garlands in their hands. In the background the guards had taken their place, they had played as Imperial guards in *Irène.*

On seeing this bust, these garlands and poems, a storm of applause, a hurricane of cheers broke out. No one felt in the mood for a satirical smile or word; had such a word been said, the one who uttered it would have exposed himself to the danger of being torn to pieces. Jealousy and hatred, anger and embitterment, everything that had made Voltaire's life difficult for several generations, had been swept away.

In the monk's costume of Leonce, Brizard stepped forth and put the first wreath on the head of the bust, while the guards gave a ruffle of drums and a flourish of trumpets. Then wreaths were put on the bayonets of the guards, who held them so that they formed a sort of triumphal arch.

The excited voices of all actors and spectators now harmonized into a single voice, calling the name which stood to them for hundreds of masterpieces. Voltaire had hid in the background of his loge, but the Marquis de Villette brought him forth. He bowed so deeply that his forehead touched the edge of the loge, and when he stood up again his eyes were filled with tears. On the stage Madame Vestris stepped forth and recited the following verses improvised by the Marquis of Saint-Marc:

Aux yeux de Paris enchanté
Reçois en ce jour un hommage
Que confirmera d'âge en âge
La sévère postérité.
Non, tu n'as pas besoin d'atteindre au noir rivage
Pour jouir de l'honneur de l'immortalité.
    Voltaire, reçois la couronne
    Que l'on vient de te présenter;
    Il est beau de la mériter,
    Quand c'est la France qui la donne.

After *Irène,* Voltaire's comedy *Nanine* was played with the same enthusiasm for the poet and the same indifference for the play, which received as much applause as the tragedy. When the curtain fell, Voltaire rose from his seat. In the corridor and on the stairs all the ladies had taken their stands, so that he went between two rows of flushed faces which smiled through tears, almost as if he were being passed from hand to hand, out to his coach.

They would not let him go, they took hold of the horses and, unbelievable as it seems, they too were kissed. The crowd called for torches, so that all could see him. When the coach began to move the enthusiastic people stood on the steps to kiss his hands once more. Again the crowd which called, "*Vive Voltaire*" was as immense as on his arrival so that the coachman had to let his horses go slowly all the way.

10

When Voltaire arrived at home he was much moved, but he said to his secretary: "My friend, you do not know the French: they were just as eager to see the Swiss Jean Jacques Rousseau. The people paid a franc to a ragman for permission to stand on his shoulders to see Rousseau. The next day a warrant was issued for his arrest, and he had to flee."

In the theater the Royal Family had been conspicuous by its absence. Marie Antoinette, who had been to the opera with the Count of Artois, later Charles X, intended to drop in, incognito, for a few minutes at the Théâtre Français. One and a half years before the Count de Provence, later Louis XVIII, had asked Voltaire for a brief musical play for a feast which he was planning to give for the Queen in Brunoi; Voltaire had been gracious enough to write for that occasion the fine *ballet divertissement* entitled *L'Hôte et l'Hôstesse.* But while the Queen was going from the opera to the theater, she received a note from the King forbidding her to do so.

Had there been real plan in the behavior of the Court, this policy of ignoring Voltaire would have been carried out. But there was no real will in this doomed regime. On April 1, for instance, *Irène* was performed in the Court of Versailles and not even enough tact was shown to invite the poet to see his own play. This gave Voltaire the wish to return to Ferney as quickly as possible, an idea which Tronchin seconded. "You have," he said, "too good a head on your shoulders not to realize that a tree of eighty-four years cannot be transplanted if one does not wish it to die." Dupuits, the husband of Marie Corneille, strongly supported Tronchin's idea of an early departure.

But these urgent requests made no impression upon Voltaire until he had a relapse. Madame Denis was bored to death in the lonely valley of the Jura mountains, and here was filled with happiness to be a person of public interest, a center of Paris. The Marquis de Villette, whose house and person were given a new splendor by Voltaire's presence, wished him to stay as did d'Alembert, Thibouville and the other *philosophes,* who were acting in the interest of their party; for, with Voltaire, they had in their midst the banner which they had been forced to do without all their lives.

As Voltaire could not remain permanently at the house of Villette—it was very dark, so that he could not work at noon without artificial light—he resolved to buy himself a house in which he could install himself as he liked. In the vicinity a house with a wonderful garden was put up for sale; first he wanted to buy this from the Count d'Hérouville. When the plan failed to go through, he walked and rode all over the city to find another house. He then bought a house which belonged to Monsieur de Villerceaux, and he was so anxious to see him that he called on him at the house of a family where he was eating dinner.

Nevertheless Voltaire declared now that he would spend the next two months in Ferney, and the plan was apparently so serious that the Prince of Condé had to promise to expect him in Dijon and to have a room ready for him.

11

In the meantime, to the astonishment of all his friends, he showed such an apparently inexhaustible vitality that even Tronchin was impressed. In a letter the latter writes: "Despite unbelievable fatigue, Voltaire is well. He wants to return to Ferney to regulate the various affairs of his colony, then come back to Paris to settle here; he has purchased a house; in all my life I have seen many crazy people, but none crazier than he. He apparently thinks he will live to be a hundred."

On April 6 Voltaire went on foot to the Academy. A poor woman who sold books at the entrance of the Tuileries ran over to him and said: "My good Monsieur de Voltaire, write me a few books which I can sell, and my fortune is made." The crowd which gathered around him called: 'This is Monsieur de Voltaire the defender of the unfortunate, who has freed the Calas and Sirven families."

Madame du Deffand wrote to Walpole: "On the streets the people follow him and call him *l'homme aux Calas*. The Court alone refuses to show enthusiasm. He is eighty-four years old and I almost believe that he cannot die. He has all his senses and none is weakened. He is a very strange individual and really of a superior kind."

Voltaire had to promise to visit the lodge of the "Nine Sisters." As the Freemasons regarded him in the light of a protector of the oppressed, without any oath of allegiance as a member of their lodge, they had resolved to give him a great reception and ceremony of homage when he called.

He was solemnly led into the lodge when he appeared, on April 7. He was seated at the side of the chairman and a laurel wreath was put on his head. In the speech which was made in his honor, there are these lines:

"We swear to help our brothers, but you have been the founder of a whole colony which adores you and which overflows with your benefactions. You have erected a church to Eternity; but, what is of greater value, you have made this church a refuge for men who have been exiled, but who were useful. Thus you, much beloved brother, have been a Freemason before you received the degree of a Freemason, and you have fulfilled the obligations of a Freemason before you promised us to keep them."

On April 11 he made his return visit to Madame du Deffand who, though a little offended because this visit had been postponed so long, as she told to her dear Walpole, received her old friend very nicely and did not reproach him in any way. He remained a whole hour and was "extremely pleasant." She wrote "if he comes to see me often, I will be very glad; if he stays away, I will know how to do without him. I neither hope for nor count upon him."

She did not see him again. Even this visit, however, gave her trouble. Her apartment was in the cloister of Saint-Joseph. The nuns learned that the pure air of the cloister had been desecrated by the presence of the most contemptible writer of France. When they heard, six weeks later, that her Godless guest had been refused a grave in consecrated soil, the nuns assembled with their pupils under the windows of Madame du Deffand and clamoring and caterwauling cried out that an inhabitant of these holy walls had opened her door to a degenerate and exiled man.

By chance Voltaire became acquainted during these last days with one member of the Royal Family. He was walking across the little garden in the Palais Royal to call upon the Countess de Blot, when he saw two little boys with their nurse maid. He asked who they were because he was struck by their remarkable resemblance to the Regent. One of them was the later King, Louis Philippe.

The nurse maid, who knew Voltaire, urged him to go in the house and to look at the two little Princesses who were sleeping. In the meantime, the Duchess had been informed that Monsieur de Voltaire was with her little children. She hurried over just as she was in petticoat and kimona, with flying hair and great enthusiasm for she was going to see for the first time a very famous man whose acquaintance she had long been anxious to make.

It is a strange thought that Voltaire, who was a young man when Louis XIV was on the throne, lived so long that he saw Louis Philippe, even though as a child.

12

Madame du Deffand was one of the friends of his youth who kept her mental faculties. The Countess of Ségur, whom he called upon, was fatally ill. She was depressed, but forgot her illness and age when the two fell to reminiscing.

Several days later he came back to her. As the Countess felt stronger, she turned the conversation to the question of his faith, requesting Voltaire to make his peace with the Church now that he was old, to repent whatever sins he had committed, and to promise penance and conversion. Thus she got him so upset that his eyes flashed and he forgot the proprieties. He even lost the moderation of expression which had always been a strong point. But here were a hundred and fifty people listening in open-mouthed amazement to Voltaire's words; so he restrained himself and shifted the subject to his old friend's health. He told her that he had felt as badly several years before, and that he had cured himself by a simple diet which consisted of the yolk of an egg beaten up with potato flour and water.

The next lady Voltaire visited was the Marquise Latour du Pin Gouvernet, formerly Suzanne de Livry, the sweetheart of his youth who had been unfaithful to him with his friend Genonville two generations ago. He crossed her doorstep with no little emotion.

Each sought in the other the lover held in memory all these years. There was still less left of the young Suzanne than of the young François, whose picture, painted by Largillière when he was twenty-four years old, hung on the wall. Nothing could have been sadder than this meeting.

13

While in Paris Voltaire was the object of passionate admiration. Versailles was steadily hostile to him. On April 12 a former Jesuit, the Abbé de Beauregard, preached in the palace chapel a sermon in which he referred directly to Voltaire, even attacked the Chancellor for not interfering with him and for not forbidding the expressions of admiration.

The priest violently attacked the newer philosophers and condemned their horrible assertions. God, the King and morality were attacked in books which tore down every government and every faith, and which the Censor nevertheless carelessly ignored. Instead of the authors being punished as they deserved, they were crowned with wreaths. The King, to whom the Prince of Beauveau, Voltaire's only friend and defender at Court, complained about the sermon, said that the Abbé, though in perhaps slightly over violent language, had done no more than his duty. And the Chancellor revoked his order to the Censor to forbid any attacks on the old man from Ferney so long as he stayed in Paris.

On April 27 Voltaire went to a session of the Academy. The Abbé Delille read several fragments of his own work, and then a translation which he had made of some of Pope's Epistles. Voltaire, who recalled the original text, compared the translation with it, gave preference to several passages of his friend Delille, and spoke in general about the necessity of enlarging the French language by new words: "Our language," he said, "is a very poor but proud woman. We have to give her alms against her will."

And he, for instance, proposed to call an actor of tragic rôles a *tragedien*. Voltaire was the first to employ this now common expression.

But this led him to talk about the necessity of revising the dictionary of the Academy; he showed how this *Dictionnaire,* the elaboration of which from the beginning had been the main task of the Academy, was insufficient, dry, devoid of any broader viewpoint, without philosophy, a discredit to literature and to the Academy. The latter should set itself to create a new one as fast as possible. He spoke with a fire and eloquence which amazed everyone.

On May 7 he came with an entirely outlined plan for the dictionary. Every Academician, he said, should take one letter of the alphabet. He, for instance, declared himself willing to take the letter "A" with which so many words commenced.

When he sat down after his detailed plan had been accepted by the Academy he said: "I thank you in the name of the alphabet." The Chevalier of Castellux answered politely for the Academy: "And we thank you in the name of literature."

14

Two days after the first visit to the Academie Française, on April 29, Voltaire attended a session in the Academie des Sciences. His presence was treated as a great event.

As it was known that he would attend, a crowd of ladies, writers and prominent people had flooded the session hall. He had scarcely appeared when everybody applauded wildly. Although he was not a member, the members at once gave him a seat among their own. Dr. Franklin, who was there, opened his arms and the two famous men embraced heartily.

On May 7, the same day on which he had spoken to the Academy about his new plan for a dictionary, he went, incognito, hidden in a little loge, to see *Alzire*. But when the actor Larive, at the end of the fourth act, thrilled the audience by his performance of Zamore, everybody, and Voltaire, too, exclaimed: "That was splendid!" He himself was greeted with ringing applause which lasted through the whole intermission, so that he was forced to rise and to thank the audience. The storm of applause was so terrific that Madame Vestris, who opened the fifth act, tried three or four times in vain to say her part. She was drowned out until by motions of his hand Voltaire thanked the public for their goodness and asked that the performance be allowed to go on undisturbed to its end. The yelling then stopped for a moment, but the public could not remain quiet on seeing Voltaire and during the entire fifth act the jubilation continued, while the actors, in the general enthusiasm and excitement, played as they had never played before.

On May 11 Voltaire felt unwell and took to bed. He had a fever. The Duke de Richelieu, who came regularly to see him, spoke to him about a narcotic which he himself used when he had an attack of rheumatism; he promised his old friend to share it with him "like a brother." As Voltaire suffered violent pains, he wrote that the agony was more than he could bear, and asked the Duke for the medicine; but the medicine turned out to have a bad effect. The two friends had not the same constitution. The feebleness of the patient alarmed those around him. He was as though broken and could not even be induced to take a little bouillon.

The parish priest of Saint-Sulpice came to the death-bed and pleaded passionately that the patient recognize the divinity of Jesus Christ. He answered only: "Just let me die in peace!"

Belle-et-Bonne remained at the bedside. She said to Lady Morgan: "All that has been said about Voltaire's fear and misgivings is invented by his enemies. Up to the last moment he showed the kindness which was part of his character; everything indicated quiet and peace, except for the little fit of impatience caused by the meddling of the parish priest."

On May 30, 1778, at eleven o'clock in the evening, Voltaire died.

15

On May 31 his old friend Madame du Deffand wrote her usual letter to Horace Walpole. The first twenty lines of the letter are concerned with the description of an illness which had a short while before overtaken her lackey Colman after a fall on the stairs.

"Whether or not he suffered also from rheumatism, he soon got pains in first one, then another place, and on the ninth day after his fall, day before yesterday, he died. It is a loss for me. He served me twenty-one years, and he was useful to me in various things. I miss him and his death is such a terrible event that it puts me in a very sad humor. And being sad, I did not think I would write you; this is why you have had no answer to your letter of the 22nd. Yesterday I changed my mind, for I do not want to break up our interchange of thoughts, which is most soothing to me, and which is perhaps the only thing which makes my life bearable.

"I thank you for all the news you have sent me; I cannot reciprocate; it seems to me that I know still less than the newspapers; I take so little part in what happens that my ignorance is perhaps a result of my indifference. I know only that Maréchal of Broglie has command of the troops in Bretagne and Normandy and that his brother has been given a command, not with him, but in Metz.

"Everybody is going away, that is, all those who used to visit me.

"The Abbé Sigorgne is here and I hope that he will remain until August, etc. (she continues with thirteen more closely cramped lines of the same interest, then adds as a postscript:)

"It is true, I have forgotten something important. Voltaire has died . . . nobody knows what to do with the body. The parish priest of St.-Sulpice will not accept it. Will it be sent to Ferney? But he is under the ban of the Bishop of the diocese to which Ferney belongs. . . ."

Madame du Deffand, who called herself Voltaire's close friend, and who had corresponded with him for forty-six years, forgot his death the day after because of the loss of one of her useful lackeys, and over such news as the whereabouts of Maréchal of Broglie and the Abbé Sigorgne.

And while this friend was giving this information about his death, the clergy of Paris circulated the most terrible descriptions of Voltaire's fear of death, of his remorse, of his fear of the devil who had come to call for him.

16

His entourage had prepared for the difficulties which were bound to follow.

A nephew, the Abbé Mignot, had during the illness of Voltaire asked the priest of Saint-Sulpice if any obstacles would be put in the way of a regular burial. The priest had answered that if Monsieur de Voltaire did not recant formally and publicly and in the greatest detail, he could not be buried in consecrated soil.

It was of no use that the Abbé objected that his uncle had made a written profession of faith and had denied various works which had been ascribed to him, that he had even written to him that if he had caused any anger that he asked for forgiveness.

The priest stuck to his guns; Voltaire was the declared opponent of religion; consequently he must make a recantation as striking as the scandal had been general.

Voltaire's two nephews, Abbé Mignot, who *Conseiller au grand Conseil,* and Dompierre d'Hornoy, called upon the minister of the Departément of Paris, and upon the police commissioner. But the Minister was content to consult the same priest of Saint-Sulpice, who in obedience to an order of the Archbishop answered the question of burial in the parish cemetery with an absolute refusal.

The Abbé did not care to risk a transportation of the body to Ferney, where Voltaire had chosen his bathroom as a grave. For it was almost certain that the same resistance would be met there. The Bishop of Annecy would not stop at any sensational action, and would show himself merciless.

It was decided that the Abbé Mignot should bury the deceased in his own Abbey Scellières, in the province Champagne.

In the night of May 30 and 31, the body was embalmed. In bathrobe and nightcap the small body was held under the arms and brought down to the waiting coach, where it was given to a servant and put in a position a sleeping man might assume.

A second coach followed with the few mourners, Dompierre d'Hornoy and his two cousins, Marchand de Varennes and Marchand de la Houlière, the former, the *maître d'hôtel du Roi,* the latter a brigadier-general of infantry. The Abbé Mignot had gone ahead to inform the Prior of Scellières of the death and explain to him the service asked of him.

It was thought that the body could remain for the time being in Scellières, and could, from there, be taken to Ferney in accordance with the will. Now it was of importance to prevent any desecration of the body. It had been Voltaire's hope to escape being thrown into the carrion pit. One day he had said to Tronchin: "All I ask is loneliness and a grave. Will it be denied me?"

In order to reassure the Prior, Mignot showed him the permission of the parish priest to transport the body:

"I give permission for the remains of Monsieur de Voltaire to be removed without ceremony and renounce in this regard all churchly rights.

Paris May 30, 1778
S. de Tersac, priest of Saint-Sulpice."

He also produced the Minister's authorization to take the body to Ferney or anywhere else.

The priest wanted to show every courtesy to his superior. The burial took place in the cellar of the cloister. In the morning at five o'clock a Mass was read. To quiet the bigots it was said that the body was covered two feet deep with unslaked lime, which had consumed it without leaving a trace. The Archbishop had meanwhile written to the Bishop of Troyes to prevent the burial, but the relatives of the dead man had worked in such haste that the prohibition came too late.

The Prior excused himself to his ecclesiastical superior by saying that even the excommunicated were not refused a grave, and Voltaire was not excommunicated. It did not help. He was dismissed. The Abbé Mignot remained unpunished for the sole reason that he was not only Abbé but also *Conseiller au grand Conseil.*

17

The unprincipled Ministry, who stood between the embitterment of the encyclopedists and of the pious, forbade the newspapers to write about Voltaire. They were not to say anything, either good or bad, about him. The *Journal de Paris* which published all death notices was ordered not to report this one. The actors received from Court an express order prohibiting the performance of any play by the poet. A prohibition whose execution proved impossible as his plays were the main part of the repertory.

The Academy ordered Voltaire a Mass by the Franciscans. The Abbé, however, had forbidden the monks to sing this Mass without his orders; they, therefore, answered that they could do nothing until they obtained the permission of the authorities. D'Alembert approached a member of the Academy, Prince Louis de Rohan, who had great influence with the Clergy and who as a Cardinal and lover of literature seemed suited to be of help to his colleague. The Prelate answered with the assurance of his good will, and the advice to postpone the matter in order to smooth the way as much as possible.

D'Alembert wrote to Frederick:

"The Academy has so far not yet held the Mass for Voltaire which it always holds for one whom it loses, and, despite all petitions, the permit may never be obtained. The refusal is a new insult to the man we miss. By the way, all writers give him the deserved consolation, that none applies for the vacant seat as his successor, and it is believed that the election will not take place very soon. It should never take place. If all felt as I do, the seat would remain vacant."

Frederick succeeded in fulfilling d'Alembert's request to have a Mass read in the Catholic church in Berlin.

18

Voltaire's family was forbidden to have a simple monument erected in the little country church in which he was buried. Mignot had ordered one from the sculptor Claudion. It was to stand on the bare uninscribed grave-stone; but Mignot had to abandon this plan.

Madame Denis gave the portrait of Voltaire which the Marquise of Gouvernet had returned to the Academy, which received it "with gratitude and mourning."

The Academy wanted to have another portrait painted from Houdon's bust, and these two pictures, painted sixty years apart, were to hang in the session hall of the Academy. But instead Houdon himself donated the terra cotta bust.

Catherine wanted to possess Voltaire's library, with his numerous margined comments in the books; also the manuscripts and original letters, and of course she permitted his heirs to take copies of every document. The library was small, altogether 6200 volumes. For, Voltaire was not a bibliophile; he used the books only as tools; he found most of them too long-winded, and often tore out the twenty or thirty sheets that he considered valuable, from a book of many hundred pages; he had these stitched and threw the rest away. Catherine was so generous as to give Madame Denis 135,000 livres and a great number of precious gifts, for these books. She wrote her a letter in which she thanked her for her kindness: "I am very much impressed by the attention and faith you have shown me; I am flattered very much that this seems to be hereditary in the family." Madame Denis could never be induced to go back to Ferney where the good people to whom Voltaire had given sanctuary in his colony were now entirely dependent on her. She unfeelingly sold Ferney for 230,000 livres to Villette, who without knowledge of Voltaire's nephews had taken the deceased's heart, and who now gave it a place in the former bedroom of the poet, in a silver gilded box which stood in a pyramid which rested on an altar.

19

It had been forbidden to erect him a monument of marble or bronze. But the question was to erect a different sort of monument, more lasting than any of stone or marble, an edition of the numerous anonymous, pseudonymous works which had always been denied by their author.

The publisher Pancoucke who had visited Voltaire in Ferney, together with his sister, Madame Suard, resolved to publish the collected works of the great writer. He wished first to gather all the material. Madame Denis let him have two boxes full of papers and manuscripts. These were collections of earlier published material.

Of real value were the thousands of Voltaire's letters. But the ladies and gentlemen of the Court who possessed them in great numbers would not let go of them. Pancoucke saw obstacles of every sort, also persecution ahead of him.

So Beaumarchais, who had more courage, bought these papers and the copyright from Pancoucke for 160,000 livres. Although Beaumarchais had the promise of secret protection from Maurepas, he very cautiously had the printing started in Kehl in Baden. Voltaire's works were not permitted to be printed on French soil.

The publication of Voltaire's writings met with no difficulties on the other side of the Rhine; the difficulty was to get the books over the bridge of Kehl into France.

The prospectus appeared in 1781; it was a small volume in itself. But the clergy watched. In the same year Beaumarchais thought of producing Voltaire's *Samson* which he had read. But he had to give this up. In the same way the Voltaire edition met with every possible obstacle. The Bishop of Amiens issued a thundering manifesto in which, however, he was clumsy enough to refer to the case of Chevalier de La Barre. The Archbishop of Vienne issued a circular to his parish telling them that they could not subscribe to such pernicious productions without committing a mortal sin.

Frederick the Great, who had expressed his joy at the undertaking and wished him luck, was deeply hurt by a passage in Voltaire's writing which the latter had never published and never meant to publish.

Voltaire, in 1759—still smarting from the humiliating scene in Frankfort—had written the *Mémoires pour servir à la vie de Monsieur de Voltaire* in which Frederick is desribed coolly but without belittling comment, in which, however, his sexual abnormality was described in eleven lines which, true or not true, could not have failed to insult him very deeply if he were ever to see them.

As was his habit, Voltaire had locked away his manuscripts but as we have seen, he was very careless in guarding his manuscripts; now and then he left the key in the lock of his manuscript cupboard as well as in his money-chest. Anybody could take copies without his knowledge.

When he had made it up with the King of Prussia, and after the two old friends had resumed their correspondence, Voltaire threw this manuscript in the fire. He had not thought of the fact that Wagnière had made two copies. But when it was found that La Harpe, in 1768, had taken possession of one of these copies, he was sent away from Ferney, and as Madame Denis had been his conspirator, she also was expelled and only much later received permission to return. After Voltaire's death, one copy came into the possession of Catherine, while Madame Denis who ever since the adventure in Frankfort, hated the King of Prussia, gave permission to Beaumarchais to include these memoirs in Voltaire's collected writings.

Beaumarchais, with his business sense, had a feeling that these indiscretions could bring him a fortune. He read them to an intimate circle of friends and they became known. The government felt that their publication would cause diplomatic difficulties with Prussia, and consequently the Minister, Monsieur de Vergenne, ordered Beaumarchais to leave them unprinted. They appeared not until 1790 in the last volume of the Kehl edition when Frederick had been dead four years.

But as early as 1784, the memoirs, taken from one stolen copy or another, were in wide circulation in Paris and the Prussian ambassador, Baron von Goltz, tried to stop the sale in vain. There can be no doubt that Frederick saw them during his last days, and that he felt that the man to whom he had been so close and who until his death had kept his friendship, after his death took unworthy revenge for the long-settled incident, more than a generation previous.

He never mentioned these memoirs. But he also never wanted to see Voltaire's bust which he had ordered from Houdon.

20

The Kehl edition ruined Beaumarchais financially. He had counted especially upon the correspondence as an attraction for the public, and especially the correspondence with rulers. No protest was expected from Russia or Prussia. But when he came to print Catherine's letters, the Empress hesitated. She did not want Voltaire's readers to know anything more about herself than what she believed to be harmless. Grimm, as her representative, had to request a copy with every other sheet a blank one so that Catherine could cut or add as she pleased. She trimmed and changed and enlarged the poor letters so much that the expenses for the reprint rose immensely. Beaumarchais had been promised that Russia would pay the unforeseen expenses. But the promise was forgotten.

In hope of a large sale, 15,000 copies had been printed; the number of subscribers, however, was only 2000. Three years passed before the first volume was ready for distribution. They came out in 1783. In 1785 no more than 30 volumes had been published.

Now the persecutions began. The Archbishop of Paris denounced the edition in a public notice. An order of the Conseil of June 3, 1785, forbade the sale. Hundreds of volumes had therefore to be smuggled into France. The government wanted to stop the subscription and issued an edict prohibiting the journalists to discuss the work or make the slightest reference to it. Beaumarchais suffered a loss of one million francs.

In August, 1792, Parisians, who had been talked into believing that Beaumarchais had transformed his house in the Boulevard Saint-Antoine into an arsenal, had forced their way in to take into their possession the cannons and guns; they found, however, nothing but the loose, plainly printed, unsold sheets of the *Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire,* a mountain of paper.

There appeared between 1817 and 1829 no less than twelve different editions of Voltaire's collected works. From 1817 to 1824, a single publisher sold 1,590,000 volumes; during the next five years an equal number were published which makes 3,000,000 volumes for a period of twelve years.

Since then the editions, ever enlarged, have appeared in great numbers.

XVI

APOTHEOSIS

1

Voltaire, conservative as he was in some respects, had done more than any other philosopher to pave the way for the Revolution.

Therefore of the thinkers of the eighteenth century, he was honored as first by the Revolution. In 1791 the National Assembly resolved, on the anniversary of his death, May 30, to bestow upon him the greatest honor with which it could distinguish a dead man.

Voltaire's body was to be removed from the Abbey in Champagne where it had been taken at night in a cart, to the Panthéon in Paris.

The Marquis de Villette, who during the Revolution had changed into a simple man of the people, plain Charles Villette, and who had become a zealous journalist of the advance guard of the Revolution, still lived in the house in the rue de Beaune. Right next to it the monks of the Theatine order had erected a big apartment house, and they were angry because one of their tenants, an engraver, had an inscription carved in the stone above his shop: *"Au grand Voltaire."* Now Villette proposed to turn "Quai des Theatins" into "Quai Voltaire." In 1791 he succeeded in this. The new name of the street was to be carved in stones from the Bastille, in which Voltaire himself had been imprisoned.

The resolution which had been passed in the National Assembly was an outgrowth of the earlier resolution that all ecclesiastical estates should be confiscated and sold, the abbey Scellières among the rest. But who then should get Voltaire's remains?

The proposition was made that the coffin be brought to Paris and buried at the foot of the monument of Henry IV, near the King whom Voltaire had glorified and whose glory he had created.

But Camille Desmoulins had this compared to erecting an image of the Eternal at the foot of St.-Crépin (a comic figure of the theater). No, a temple must be erected to Voltaire.

On November 17, 1790, the Théâtre Français had again performed Voltaire's *Brutus*. The play was given amid immense excitement. When Mirabeau entered he was greeted with the call "Brutus!" The first act, which was short, took up an hour, for every line became a pretext for a demonstration. In addition to this there was an attempt to make up for the ringing applause for the republicans on the stage by calling now and then *"Vive le Roi!"* The lines

> Mais je te verrai vaincre ou mourrai comme toi,
> Vengeur du nom romain, libre encore, et sans roi,

called forth one single cheer for the King.

2

The inhabitants of the community of Romilly, however, wished to keep the body. Finally they asked to be permitted to keep the head and the right arm. But this had too much of Roman Catholicism in it, reminiscent of Saint's bones and relics.

Despite this the heel bone of one foot was stolen by an admirer. Dr. Bouquet who had been present when the body was exposed gave the middle part of the foot to the museum in Troyes. Otherwise the body was unharmed. An oak wreath was put around his head and the body was put in a sarcophagus.

On the way from Scellières to Romilly, the procession passed through rows of people who everywhere held fresh green branches or cypress branches. Flowers were thrown on the cloth which covered the coffin. Women held their children up and let them kiss the sarcophagus.

Strangely enough, an attack was feared, and it was made known that it would have to break the resistance of 2000 poor people before it could take this precious body away from the procession.

Voltaire's opponents in Paris said that the transfer of the body to the capital would cost 300,000 livres. Villette pledged the friends of the deceased to take all expense upon themselves, so that the city of Paris would have not more to pay than 18,000 livres, while at least 18,000 visitors would flood the city to attend the ceremonies and would probably spend 80,000 livres.

By a strange chance Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were brought back from Varennes to Paris as captives by a hostile crowd, King and Queen in name only, just at the time when Voltaire, "King Voltaire," returned to the capital, dead but immortal, triumphant, glorified and revenged against the arbitrary authorities as well as against the priests who had abused their power.

3

All authorities of the Seine Valley had come out and surrounded the coach which was covered with wreaths and loose flowers. When, on July 9, a letter from the Department informed the National Assembly that the procession was coming near and would arrive on Sunday, *le procureur-syndic* and the mayor went to meet it, the former to the border of the Département, the latter to the city limits of Paris. On July 11, at ten o'clock in the morning, the procession passed the walls of the city. A squadron of cavalry led, then the infantry; then came the triumphal coach, with wheels of bronze. The coach was decorated with garlands, cypress and crepe. After it followed the authorities. They all wanted to celebrate one of the greatest minds, as in former times homage had been paid to a ruler. They wanted to show their gratitude to him for freeing thought, making possible political liberty, and leading the resistance against the Church, and the obsolete criminal laws.

Where once had stood the Bastille in which Voltaire had been imprisoned, a structure had been erected. There the coffin was set down amid general rejoicing. Flowers covered the earth. Stones which had been part of the Bastille had been used to form a base on which allegories and inscriptions were written.

A great procession arrived, writers, engineers, drummers, gunners, a battalion of children, deputations from the various schools, societies with their flags.

The laborers who had torn down the Bastille carried chains, cannon balls, cuirasses, as a sign of the victory. A citizen dressed as an "Amazon," one of the heroines of the siege of the Bastille, carried a relief showing the wrecking of the state prison; citizens from the quarter of Saint-Antoine accompanied her, carrying the tri-colored flag. The Gardes Français carried a model of the Bastille. Then followed the voters of 1789 and 1790, then the Swiss Guard, deputations from the theaters of France; and then Voltaire's gilded statue which was wreathed with laurel and next followed the members of the Academy, and then France's writers who surrounded a wonderful casket containing the seventy volumes of the collected works of Voltaire which Beaumarchais had donated to the Département.

A great band preceded the coach, which was drawn by twelve white horses four abreast. They were led by grooms in Roman costume. The sarcophagus was of porphyry, and rose three steps above the coach. On the cover was carved a couch on which Voltaire lay as if asleep. By his side lay a broken lyre, and the genii of immortality held a wreath of stars about his head. Four stage masques decorated the corners of the coach, and four mourning genii holding torches decorated the sides. The inscription on the front of the sarcophagus read: *He revenged Calas, La Barre, Sirven and Montbailli. As a poet, thinker, and historian, he gave mankind the greatest gifts. He has prepared us for liberty.*

Somewhat more sophisticated was the use of two verses of Voltaire on the sides of the sarcophagus. On the one side:

> Si l'homme est créé libre, il doit se gouverner.

On the other:

Si l'homme a des tyrans, il doit les détrôner.

Behind the sarcophagus marched a deputation of the National Assembly, next came representatives of the Départements, the Supreme Court, the Judges of the Courts of Paris. A battalion of veterans concluded the procession.

4

The procession passed along the Boulevards to the Opera. Voltaire's bust had been placed outside the building. Three medallions encircled by flower garlands bore the names of three works, *Pandora, Le Temple de la Gloire* and *Samson.* At the entrance waited the singers of the opera. They sang a hymn in his honor. Chéron stepped forth with a laurel wreath, and Ponteuil kissed the statue in an outburst of enthusiasm which was shared by the other artists and by the crowd.

The cortege proceeded to the Place Louis Quinze and then to the Tuileries. All windows in the palace were occupied by the King's household and the servants, with the exception of one window, the curtains of which were drawn. Behind them sat the King and the Queen, who had been brought back by force from their flight, and who were alarmed at the sight of this honor to a simple citizen whom France's Kings had attempted to suppress by all means in their power. The contrast was startling between the genius which reigned over these crowds, and the two crowned heads of the overthrown monarchy, who huddled behind drawn curtains.

Villette, who had never tired of calling himself a relative of Voltaire's, and who liked to remind people that he was in possession of Voltaire's heart, had on his house, the last residence of Voltaire, installed the inscription:

Son esprit est partout, et son cœur est ici.

A woman from the lower classes who failed to understand these words, explained the inscription thus: *Eh, son cœur, c'est Madame de Villette.*

On the other side of the house was a big amphitheater which was filled with pretty women and young girls in white dresses, with wreaths of roses on their heads. As soon as the coach came in sight they began to strew flowers. When Houdon's statue arrived opposite the amphitheater and was put in place under an arch of branches, they stopped.

Madame de Villette came out of the house and was carried to the statue of her foster father. With tears in her eyes she bent over and kissed the statue, while the vast crowds burst into applause. Then she led her little daughter up to Voltaire, which, according to tradition of the time, meant that she was dedicating the child to reason and freedom.

The funeral march ended and a triumphal song began, with words by Chénier. An orchestra of antique instruments made after those on the column of Trajon played the accompaniment.

Reine de Villette, with her daughter and the two mademoiselles Calas, took their seats in front of the catafalque. A group of young women followed it.

In front of the old Théâtre Français, where Voltaire's first tragedy had been played, they stopped again. The façade was covered with a great painting, showing Voltaire's bust as two genii, one on each side, wreathed it with oak leaves. The inscription read:

> At the age of seventeen years he wrote *Oedipe.*

Then they came to the Odéon Théâtre. Garlands were hanging on columns. Thirty-two medallions bore the names of the best works of Voltaire. The following inscription could be read:

> At the age of eighty he wrote *Irène.*

5

One night in May, 1814, Voltaire's bones were removed from the lead coffin in the Pantheon and thrown into a sack by a number of young reactionary fanatics led by the director of the mint, Monsieur de

Puymorin. The sack was put into a coach which was waiting behind the church. In the dark of the night and by unfrequented streets they rode to the Barrière de la Gare, where there was a dumping ground. Other members of the conspiracy who were waiting had dug a deep hole in which the remains disappeared without a trace forever.

There is a funny little globe whose inhabitants poison their wise men and their saviors, burn their heroes and thinkers, chain their liberators, set them free again, acclaim them after their death, and then hide them in a hole as one would hide dirt or a treasure.

The giant from Sirius discovered this little globe and found it inhabited by a mob of absurdly small creatures, most of whom were engaged in making life difficult for their fellows, and exterminating each other. He did not fail to recognize their many pleasant and worthy qualities. He saw that now and then they helped each other.

But he marvelled at their tendency to misunderstand their greatest members and to mistreat them. Those who drew those humble creatures from the mire of stupidity in which they had lost themselves, were the very ones whom they liked best to pull down and drown in this same mud. Then to the same persons they erected statues, first of wood or limestone, later of gold or ebony, finally of marble or bronze. After this was done they liked to throw dirt at the statues, wash them off afterward, slander them once again and only after a long time let them come out in their true form and color.

THE END

INDEX

[*Words in italics denote titles of books*]

Abbé Nadal, i, 247

Abbeville, ii, 229, 231, 301; execution of La Barre at, ii, 219, 227f.

Abby Scellières, ii, 347, 355

About, Edmond, ii, 93

Abrégé Chronologique, ii, 154

Acadèmie Française, i, 133; ii, 165; Voltaire's desire to become a member of, ii, 13

Achard, Paul, Voltaire frees, ii, 207

Aché, Count d', ii, 292, 293

Acosta, i, 162

Adam, Father, ii, 310

Adam Homo, i, 13

Adam, statue by, ii, 27

Adamo, i, 185

Addison, i, 177, 186 ff, 192

Adelaide, Princess, Prince of Conti's suit for, ii, 24

Adélaide du Guesclin, i, 261f; ii, 125

Adlerfelt's Military Journal, i, 209

Adrienne Lecouvreur, i, 219

Advice to a Journalist, i, 165

Æneid, i, 126f.

Agénois, Duke of, i, 287, 319; ii, 266

Aguesseau, d', i, 17, 365

Aigueberre, Dumas d', i, 255

Aiguillon, Duke d', ii, 266, 267, 268, 272, 299

Aïssé, Mlle. d', i, 218, 237, 383; ii, 123; life of, ii, 124f.

Aix, Archbishop of, ii, 116; Parliament of, i, 336f.

Aix-la-Chapelle, peace of, i, 271

Alain, Maître, Voltaire's work at office of, i, 69

Albon, Madame d', ii, 115

Alciphron, i, 179

Alembert, Jean le Rond d', i, 17, 102, 301, 339; ii, 71, 84, 90, 97, 98, 104, 107, 109, 114, 116, 129, 165, 166, 193, 196, 230-232, 253, 257, 272, 280, 300, 325, 334, 339; King of Prussia grants pension to, 30; Voltaire's letters to, i, 14; ii, 94, 119, 120, 189, 230; writes to Voltaire, ii, 117; work on *Encyclopedia*, ii, 118; letter to Frederick, 349

Alexander the Great, i, 4

Algarotti, i, 273, 300; ii, 61f.

Aligre, Marshal d', i, 120

Allainval, i, 106

Alliance between France and England, i, 80

Alzire, i, 329, 355ff., 374; ii, 83, 131, 344; dedication to, i, 355; success of, i, 355

Amelot, i, 295, 305; Voltaire's letter to, i, 307

Amiens, Bishop of, ii, 221, 351

Amor, statue of, in Bellevue, ii, 27

Anecdotes sur Fréron, ii, 164

Andreino, i, 185

Anet, Château, Voltaire's arrival at, ii, 36

Anhalt-Zerbst, Princess of, ii, 242

Anjou, Duchess of, i, 333

Anna, Ivanovna, i, 221f.

Annals, of Tacitus, ii, 244

Anne of Austria, i, 52, 53, 207; death of, i, 114

Annecy, Bishop of, Voltaire builds church for, ii, 153

Annette, i, 75

Anti-Machiavelli, i, 300; ii, 4

Appeal to the Public, ii, 68

Arc, Jeanne d', i, 330, 332ff., 341; Voltaire on, i, 334

Arceuil, i, 244

Aremberg, Duke of, i, 58; entertaining Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet, ii, 3

Aretino, Pietro, Voltaire compared to, i, 4

Argens, Marquis d', ii, 61, 206; Frederick writes poem to, 76; Voltaire's letters to, 80, 95

Argenson, Marquis d', i, 48, 49, 51, 52, 81, 94, 283, 305ff.; ii, 10, 12f., 32, 106f.; Voltaire's letters to, i, 56; ii, 4, 9, 13; diary of, 7, 122; death of, 123; President Hénault writes to, 155

Argental d', Count Fériol d', i, 118, 156, 218, 238, 265, 330, 349, 357, 359ff., 277; ii, 10, 40, 49, 56, 186, 189, 194, 253, 281, 315, 318, 321, 330; Adrienne Lecouvreure's letter to, i, 224f.; Madame du Châtelet's letter to, i, 304, 358, 360f., 403; Voltaire's letters to, i, 103, 329, 363; ii, 9, 55, 62, 78, 189, 193, 218, 229, 300
Argental, Countess d', ii, 253
Argenteuil, i, 336
Arnaud, Baculard d', i, 52
Arnauld, Sophie, ii, 148
Ars amatoria, i, 356
Art of Poetry, i, 186
Artemile, i, 117
Artois, Count d', ii, 333, 338
Arty, Ferrand, i, 359
Arouet, Armand, i, 26, 27, 108, 156; attitude toward Voltaire, i, 28
Arouet family, ii, 35; François, i, 25, 61; death of, i, 107f.; titles of, 26
Arouet, François Marie, childhood of, i, 25-54
Arouet, Helenus, i, 25
Arouet le jeune, Voltaire, anagram of, i, 100
Arouet, Marguérite-Catherine, i, 28, 37
A Short View of Tragedy, i, 190
Asselin, Abbé, Voltaire's letter to, i, 374
Asyndicus, i, 194
Athalie, i, 245
Audibert, Voltaire's letter to, ii, 194
Audra, Abbé, ii, 237
August III, i, 268
Augustus, Emperor, i, 106
Augustus the Strong, i, 210ff., 220ff.
Aumont, Duke d', ii, 30
Auriac, President d', ii, 196
Austria, ii, 24; France declaring war with, i, 281
Auteroche, Count d', i, 223
Autumn, i, 162
Auvergne, Cardinal of, i, 50
Aux Manes de M. de Genonville, i, 97
Auxonne, Château, i, 265, 267
Avis important d'un gentilhomme, etc., ii, 275
Avis au public sur les parricides imputés aux Calas et aux Servien, ii, 219, 235
Aydie, Chevalier d', ii, 123; Mademoiselle Aïssé's love for, 124
Ayen, Duke d', i, 283
Azilli, Madame d', i, 362
Babouc, i, 391; ii, 37
Bachélier, i, 276ff.
Bacon, Sir Francis, Voltaire on, i, 202
Baculard, D'Arnaud, ii, 58
Baden, Margravine of, ii, 218
Baden-Durlach, Margrave of, Voltaire's visit to, ii, 133
Baggesen, ii, 104
Ballantyne, i, 169
Balleroy, M. de, i, 323
Balzac, Jean Louis, i, 100
Barrière, ii, 361
Barrois, ii, 7
Barry, Guillaume du, ii, 264, 265
Barry, Madame du, ii, 265, 266, 267, 268, 272, 298
Barthe, Nicholas, ii, 317
Bastille, i, 14; ii, 99, 109, 357; Marmontel sent to, ii, 36; Voltaire imprisoned in the, i, 94ff.
Bayeux, Bishop of, i, 302
Bayle, Pierre, i, 122, 194f., 253; ii, 108
Bayreuth, i, 403; Voltaire in, i, 311; Voltaire's letter to, i, 310f;
Bayreuth, Margravine de, ii, 78; Voltaire visited by, ii, 109
Beaudrigue, David de, ii, 204, 211; fanaticism of, 177ff., 184
Beaujolais, Princess de, i, 121
Beaumarchais, Pierre Augustin Caron de, ii, 279, 287, 288, 301, 302, 351-353, 358; letter to La Vallière, 280; Voltaire on, 281, 286
Beaumont, Elie de, ii, 192, 193, 195, 217, 218, 219, 234f., 245, 272, 300; Voltaire's letters to, 215; Protestants roused against, 236
Beaune, rue de, i, 216
Beauregard, Abbé de, ii, 342
Beauregard, Captain, i, 92, 95; caning Voltaire, i, 119; Voltaire insulting, i, 118
Beauvais, Bishop of, i, 334
Beauveau, Prince of, ii, 322, 326, 336 343
Beccaria Marchese de, ii, 233
Bedford, Duke of, i, 333f.
Bel, Abbé, ii, 209
Bélébat, Villa, i, 144
Beethoven, i, 215
Belle et Bonne, ii, 316, 345
Belle-Isle, Marshal, i, 281, 284; ii, 24
Belle-Isle, brothers, i, 280f
Bellecau, ii, 323
Belleval, ii, 221, 223, 225; La Barre accused by, ii, 222
Bellmann, i, 144

Bender, Charles XII and Fabrice in, i, 208
Benedict XIV, ii, 13ff., 81; letter of to Voltaire, 14; sends Voltaire hair shirt of St. Francis, 153
Benedictine monks, ii, 288ff.
Béqus, Anne, ii, 263
Béqus, Jeanne, ii, 263, 264, 265. *See also* Madame du Barry
Bereseny, Count de, ii, 47f.
Berkeley, i, 179
Berlin, Voltaire's stay in, i, 308; Voltaire's welcome to, ii, 59
Bernard, Mlle., i, 216f.
Bernières, Madame de, i, 116, 119, 140, 145, 156, 168f., 216, 378; ii, 321; interest in Voltaire, i, 112; Voltaire's letter to, i, 108f.
Bernières, President de, i, 112f., 368, 370, 376
Bernis, Abbé de, ii, 19, 21, 28, 166, 186, 262, 310, 311; Voltaire's letter to, 310
Berri, Duchess de, i, 87, 89, 99f., 140; epigram on, i, 90
Berthier, Father, ii, 137
Bessières, Mlle. de, i, 169
Béthune-Sully, Duchess de, i, 140
Béthune-Sully, Maximilian Henry de, i, 25, 58; ii, 7
Biar, i, 37
Bibliothèque Nationale, i, 206
Bignon, Abbé, i, 133
Bismarck, ii, 104
Björnson and Ibsen, Voltaire and Rousseau compared to, ii, 104
Blainville, Madame de, i, 159
Blois, Duchess de, i, 87
Blol, Countess de, ii, 341
Boccaccio, i, 175, 345; ii, 104
Boileau, i, 16, 173, 253, 355; ii, 335
Boindu, i, 133
Boisgelin, ii, 116
Boismont, Abbé, ii, 116
Boleyn, Anne, i, 288
Bolingbroke, Henry Saint John, Lord, i, 50, 53, 113ff., 149, 158ff., 165ff., 171, 173ff., 191, 207; ii, 120; on Marlborough, i, 15; Voltaire and, i, 113ff.
Bond, Mr., i, 359
Bonnet, ii, 309
Bonneval, Count de, i, 134
Borne, ii, 104
Bosquier, Father, ii, 227
Bossuet, i, 15, 124
Bouchardon, i, 357
Boucher, ii, 116
Boufflers, Duc de, i, 48f.; visits Voltaire, ii, 147f.; on Voltaire, 152
Boufflers, Marquise de, i, 271; ii, 8, 39ff., 54, 92; Saint-Lambert and, 40, 43
Bouillon, Duchess de, i, 219, 227f.; Bouret painting, i, 229ff.; conversation with Bouret, i, 230ff; jealousy of Adrienne Lecouvreur, i, 230f.; planning to murder Adrienne Lecouvreur, i, 230f.
Bouillon, Emmanuel Théodore de La Tour d'Auvergne, duc de, i, 106, 219, 320, 323
Bouillon, Hotel de, i, 228ff.
Bouillon, house of, i, 240
Bouquet, Dr., 356
Bourbon, Duke Henry de, i, 80, 140ff., 144, 148, 235; ii, 333
Bourbon, Duke Louis de, i, 106
Bourbon, Countess de, ii, 333
Bouret, Siméon, Abbé, i, 227ff.; arrest of, i, 235; discharge from prison, i, 239; in the Bastille, i, 238f.; retracting accusation, i, 239; unveiling murder plot upon Adrienne Lecouvreur, i, 233ff.
Bourgeoisies de Qualité, benefit performance of, ii, 161
Bourgogne, i, 112
Bourgogne, Duchess de, i, 132
Boursouffle, ii, 36
Boyer, *see* Mirepoix, Bishop of
Boze, Claude Gros de, i, 301
Bragelongue, Abbé de, i, 133
Brake, Tycho, i, 16
Brancas-Villars, Duke Louis Antoine de, i, 91, 254
Brancas, Duchess of, i, 286
Breteuil, Baron Louis de, i, 95, 132, 396; ii, 250, 251
Breteuil, Gabrielle Eurlie, Le Tonnellier de, i, 255f.
Brienne, Cardinal, i, 116
Brizard, ii, 335, 337
Broglie, Maréchal of, ii, 346
Brosses, President de, ii, 169; Voltaire's law-suit against, 64; Voltaire purchases estate of, 134; Voltaire's quarrel with, 171-174; Voltaire blocks election to the Academy, 173
Brou, Madame de, ii, 222, 224, 227
Broutel, ii, 229, 301
Brummer, Grand-Marshal, ii, 242
Brumoy, Father, i, 45
Brunetière, on Voltaire, i, 4
Brunswig, Duke of, ii, 231
Brussels, i, 313; ii, 5; Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet at, ii, 3
Brutus, i, 159, 165, 169f., 251, 359; ii, 91, 365; première of, i, 216f.; success of, in Paris, 6

Buckingham, Duke of, i, 185f.
Buffon, i, 18, 183; ii, 29; letter of, 59
Burke, i, 183
Bussy-Rabutin, Abbé Roger de, i, 39, 57f., 85f.; ii, 293; Voltaire on, i, 59
Butler, Samuel, i, 184
Byng, Admiral, death of, ii, 127; Richelieu defeating, i, 269; Voltaire's championship of, ii, 126
Byron, i, 74; ii, 93, 104; on Voltaire, i, 5

Cadière, Mlle., i, 266, 336ff.
Cadogan, Lord, i, 134
Cæsar's Death, see La Mort de César
Cairon, Mademoiselle, ii, 250
Calandre, rue de la, Voltaire lodging on, i, 105
Calandrin, Madame, ii, 123
Calas case, ii, 215, 216, 235, 358; effect on Sirven case, ii, 210f.
Calas, Donal, ii, 194, 195, 204; ii, 175; Voltaire's description of, ii, 191
Calas family, ii, 220
Calas, Jean, ii, 175, 176ff., 204, 206, 207, 258; torture of, ii, 182ff; Voltaire's struggle to establish innocence of, ii, 188-197
Calas, Madame, ii, 175, 185, 193, 194, 197, 204
Calas, Marc-Antoine, ii, 190, 204; murder of, ii, 175-186
Calas, Pierre, 175ff., 194, 195, 204; arrest of, ii, 177, 185
Caligula, ii, 306
Callot, Jacques, i, 392
Callot, Marguerite, i, 392
Calvin, i, 4, 343
Calvinists, Voltaire and, ii, 220
Camargo, sisters, kidnapping of, i, 237
Camuset, i, 235
Candide, i, 20, 174; ii, 143-145; inspiration of, ii 89; Milton ridiculed in, i, 187; Voltaire denies writing, ii, 145f.; Voltaire starts, ii, 134
Canillac, Abbé de, ii, 13
Canterbury Tales, i, 189
Carcenac, Monsieur, ii, 209
Carey, Mary, i, 288
Carlier, i, 9
Carlsson, i, 211f.
Carlyle, i, 296
Caroline, Queen, i, 171f., 202
Carteret, Lord, i, 197
Cartesian teachings, Royal Council forbidding, i, 178
Carton, Marie, i, 229
Casanova, ii, 184; Voltaire's interview with, ii, 131ff.
Castellux, Chevalier de, ii, 116, 344
Castres, Bishop of, ii, 208
Catharine II, ii, 151, 219, 232, 240-261, 315, 325, 335, 350ff; admiring Louis XIV, i, 36; becomes Empress, 248; education of, ii, 244; effect of Voltaire's death on, 260; friendship for Voltaire, 240; letters to Voltaire, ii, 241, 253f., 258; marriage of, 244; on Empress Elizabeth, ii, 245; on Peter's cruelty, ii, 246; on Peter, ii, 247; on Voltaire, i, 20, 21
Catholic Church, ii, 82
Catholicism vs. Protestantism, ii, 175-219
Cataline, ii, 50, 56
Cato, Voltaire on, i, 188
Cauchon, i, 334
Caumartin, Louis Urbain de, 26, 35, 57, 75, 94f., 153
Cavalier, Jean, i, 63
Caumartin, Louis Urbain Lefèvre de, Marquis de Saint-Angle, i, 34, 35
Caylus, Count de, Voltaire's correspondence with, i, 253
Celle, ii, 28
Céran, i, 258f.
Cerceau, Père de, i, 42
Chalons, Voltaire's illness in, ii, 50
Châlons-sur-Marne, i, 336
Chambre de Justice, Philippe d'Orléans founding, i, 106f.
Chambrier, Baron de, i, 313
Champonin, Madame de, i, 363, 394
Chanson de Roland, i, 199
Chantemerle, ii, 26
Chantilly, i, 36
Chapelain, i, 186, 330f.; *La Pucelle* of, ii, 133
Characteristics, i, 174
Charles V, ii, 338
Charles VII, i, 207, 268, 315, 330f., 334, 344; election of, i, 287
Charles XII, i, 104f., 142, 206, 210ff., 262; ii, 107, 154, 156; Marlborough and, i, 207ff.
Charles Augustus, i, 296
Charles Edward, i, 269; ii, 32
Charles Frederick, Duke, i, 212
Charles, Prince, i, 314
Charlis, Princess de, i, 277
Charolais, Count de, i, 268
Charolais, Princess de, i, 141, 279f., 285

Chartres, Duchess of, i, 317
Chartres, Duke de, ii, 287
Chasot, ii, 61
Château Bellevue, erection of, ii, 27
Chateaubriand, ii, 93
Châteauneuf, Abbé de, i, 26, 30ff., 57, 62, 64, 69; taking Voltaire to The Hague, i, 62
Châteauroux, i, 293ff.
Châteauroux, Duchess of, *see* La Tournelle, Madame de
Châtelet-Lemont, Marquis Florent Claude du, i, 255, 360ff.
Châtelaine, Pierre and Donal Cales, live at, ii, 194; Emily's reconciliation with, ii, 51f; obtains post at Court of Lorraine, ii, 47; Voltaire's loan to, ii, 55
Châtelet, Marquise Emrlie du, i, 50f., 65, 132, 137, 165, 175, 260f., 282, 299ff., 303ff., 313, 325-408; ii, 3ff., 9, 13, 38, 54, 61, 62, 125, 250; affair with Saint Lambert, ii, 41; as a gambler, ii, 36f.; death of, ii, 54; essay for Academy of Sciences, i, 386f.; in Paris, ii, 49; in physics, i, 346; letter of, ii, 41ff., 48f.; life of, i, 254ff.; on history, i, 19; on Voltaire, i, 359 ff.; pregnancy of ii, 51ff.; Voltaire's poems on i, 352ff.
Châtenay, Voltaire exiled to, i, 95
Chaucer, i, 189
Chaulière, i, 56
Chaulieu, Abbé de, i, 31, 57ff., 85, 103, 251; Voltaire on, i, 59f.; Voltaire's letter to, i, 59, 85
Chaulnes, Duke de, ii, 21, 283
Chaumont, ii, 220; Voltaire frees, ii, 207
Chauvelin, Madame de, i, 277; ii, 307
Chauvelin, Marquis de, ii, 132
Chénier, Marie Joseph, i, 131; ii, 360
Chéron, ii, 359
Chesterfield, Lord, i, 209; ii, 165; quoted, 156; Voltaire declining invitation of, i, 163
Chetwood, i, 164
Chevreuse, Duchess de, ii, 17, 19
Chevreuse, Duke de, ii, 19
Chézeri, ii, 303
Childe Harold, Voltaire admired in, i, 5
China, religious toleration in, ii, 198
Chinon, i, 333
Choiseul, Duchess de, ii, 255, 314; Voltaire's letter to, ii, 314f.
Choiseul, Duke de, i, 295; ii, 99, 135, 153, 165, 189, 196, 198, 207, 235f., 262, 265ff.
Choisi, i, 281; ii, 23
Christian, August, Prince, ii, 242
Christian VII., ii, 219
Christine, rue, i, 132
Ciber, Colley, i, 164, 248
Cicero, ii, 244; quoted, ii, 198; Voltaire compared to, i, 3
Cideville, i, 52, 217, 259, 352; Voltaire's letters to, i, 54, 303, 372; ii, 11; Voltaire recommending Thiriot to, i, 258
Cinna, i, 106; ii, 166, 323
Cirey, i, 260, 298f., 325-408; ii, 3, 5, 10, 36, 38f., 61; Monsieur du Châtelet's visit at, ii, 51f.; return to, ii, 9; Voltaire in, i, 325ff.; Voltaire leaves, ii, 55; Voltaire on, i, 352ff.; Voltaire's physical laboratory in, i, 18; situation of, i, 273
Civil War in France, i, 165
Clairaut, i, 328, 330, 351, 373, 380f.; ii, 62
Clairon, Mlle. de, i, 237f.; ii, 206
Clarke, Doctor Samuel, i, 197, 204, 355; on Newton's theories, i, 181
Claudion, ii, 349
Clayton, Mrs., i, 171
Clément le Dijon, i, 369
Clement VII., Pope, ii, 306
Clement XIV., ii, 310, 311
Clermont, Count de, i, 229, 235, 246, 293; ii, 166
Cliphan, i, 393
Clytemnestre, Lauraguais dedicates to Voltaire, ii, 148
Cocigny, Duke de, ii, 31
Colbert, i, 10, 78, 84; ii, 156
Collège d' Harcourt, i, 303
Collège Louis-le-Grand, Voltaire in, i, 40ff.
Colletet, i, 106
Colman, ii, 345
Comédie Française, i, 139, 219; ii, 3, 8, 317; seating arrangements, i, 245
Commentaire Historique, i, 197, 209; ii, 8
Commentaire Philosophique sur le Compelle Intrare, i, 194
Commerci, ii, 43
Compiègne, i, 279, 334
Compiègne, l'Hermitage in, ii, 27
Condamine, i, 109; Voltaire's letter to, i, 327, 329

Condé, Prince of, i, 80, 89, 156f., 246, 286; ii, 156, 339; Prince of Conti's jealousy of house of, ii, 24
Condorcet, Marquis de, i, 243, 387; ii, 122, 288, 300, 308; on Voltaire, i, 7
Congreve, i, 177; Voltaire and, i, 172
Conseiller au Grand Conseil, ii, 347f.
Contes en vers, i, 72
Conti, Prince de, i, 153, 260; ii, 24, 92, 287; Voltaire on, i, 86
Conti, Princess de, i, 281; ii, 24
Copernicus, i, 16; ii, 109
Corfu, defense of, i, 213
Corneille, Jean François, ii, 160; appeals to Voltaire, ii, 161
Corneille, Marie, ii, 161, 316, 339; description of, ii, 162; Votaire sends to Tronchin, ii, 161f.
Corneille, Pierre, i, 16, 22, 103, 106, 188, 219, 247; ii, 50, 112, 160, 323; Voltaire's criticism of, i, 30; ii, 165-167
Correggio, i, 357
Cortez, i, 356
Cosi, Sancta, i, 194
Courcillon, Marquis de, i, 72
Courdimanche, i, 144
Courier, ii, 93
Courland, Duchy of, i, 221f.
Coussi, Aydie as model for, ii, 125
Couvrigny, Pere de, i, 238
Covelle, Robert, scandal of, ii, 101f.
Cowley, i, 189
Coyel, i, 220
Coyer, Abbé, ii, 152
Cramer, Philibert, ii, 149
Cramer, Madame, Richelieu's passion for, ii, 150
Crassy, ii, 316
Crébillon, i, 133, 303; ii, 17, 56; Voltaire's dislike of, ii, 49
Crécy, description of, ii, 26f.
Créquy, Count, i, 389
Creutz, ii, 116
Cri du sang innocent, ii, 301
Criminal law, old-French, i, 9, 10; Voltaire's fight for reform of, i, 12
Critique de l'Ecole de Femmes, i, 119
Culloden, battle of, i, 171
Cumberland, Duke of, i, 170, 269; ii, 32

Daily Journal, i, 190; on Voltaire, i, 171
Daily Post, i, 190
Dame de Volupté, see Boufflers, Marquise de
Damien, ii, 187; attacking Louis XV., i, 11
Damilaville, ii, 189, 193, 204, 230, 236, 269, 272, 300; Voltaire's letters to, ii, 188, 190, 191, 236, 291f.
Danchet, i, 132
Daniel, Perè, ii, 155
Dante, i, 342, 345; ii, 34
Darmstadt, Princes of, ii, 218
Daschkoff, Princess, ii, 249, 250
Dauphin, ii, 20; attitude of, toward Madame de Pompadour, ii, 23; marriage of, ii, 9
Dauphine, attitude of, toward Madame de Pompadour, ii, 23
Dauphine, rue, i, 132
David, Pompadour's suggestion that Voltaire translate psalms of, ii, 122
Dawley, i, 175
Death, i, 185
Death penalty, methods of, i, 10
Debarraux, i, 193
Déclaration, ii, 195
Défence de mon Oncle, i, 33
Deffand, Madame du, i, 58, 156, 163, 256ff., 364; ii, 18, 56, 279, 329f., 342, 345f.; correspondence with Félicité de Vintimille, i, 282; friendship with Mademoiselle de L'Espinasse, ii, 115; Hénault's letter to, ii, 325, 326; letter to Walpole, ii, 340, 345f.; Voltaire's letter to, ii, 254f.; Voltaire visited by, ii, 324; Voltaire visits, 341
Defoe, Daniel, i, 184
De l'Allemagne, i, 199
De L'Esprit, ii, 202, 224; burning of, ii, 146
De l'homme on des principes, etc., ii, 309
Delille, Abbé, ii, 343
De matrimonio, ii, 61
Demotica, Charles XII and Fabrice in, i, 208
Demoulin, i, 254, 366
Denham, Sir John, i, 174
Denis, Captain, i, 28
Denis, Madame, ii, 57, 58, 129, 147, 318, 321ff., 326, 335f., 349ff.; arrest of, ii, 75; Voltaire visits, ii, 5
Descartes, i, 17f., 35, 178ff., 351, 365; ii, 62, 109; Voltaire on, i, 202ff.
Deschauffours, Paul Edouard, i, 147ff.; execution of, i, 151

Desfontaines, Abbé François Guyot, i, 47, 133, 147f., 165, 244, 266, 365ff.; ii, 6, 123; life of i, 370f.; Voltaire on, i, 374
Deshayes, ii, 19
Desmarets, i, 87, 394, 399ff.; playing in *Œdipe*, i, 102
Desmouliens, Camille, ii, 310, 356
Despréaux, Nicolas Boileau, i, 30, 31; ii, 4, 335
Destouches, i, 118, 274; ii, 114
Dettingen, i, 268, 304
Devaux, i, 399ff.
Dialogue on Ancient Music, i, 33
Dictonnaire, Bayle's ii, 244
Dictionnaire Philosophique, i, 14, 194, 390; ii, 71, 106, 108, 181, 224, 226, 228, 253; burning of, ii, 220
Dictionnaire Portatif, ii, 99
Diderot, i, 12, 13, 192, 270, 340; ii, 30, 71, 84, 92, 114, 118, 120, 128f., 201, 230f., 257
Didier, i, 145; letter of, ii, 108; on Catherine II., 250; persecution of, ii, 117
Didot, ii, 7
Diet, Polish, i, 222
Dijon, Voltaire stops at, ii, 320
Diogenes, Voltaire calls Rousseau a, ii, 98
Diras, Marquis d'Argence, de, ii, 192
Directorium Inquisitorium, ii, 189
Discours en Vers sur l'Homme, i, 175
Discours sur la Tragédie, i, 159, 190
Discours sur l'Envie, i, 372
Divine Comedy, ii, 34
Doctor Akakia, burning of, ii, 108
Dodington, Bubb, (Lord Melcomb), i, 161, 173
Dominique, i, 121
Don Carlos, Infante, i, 121
Don Quixote, i, 184
Don Quixote, i, 184; Casanova compares Voltaire to, ii, 132
Doutes sur la mesure des forces vives et sur leur nature, i, 348
Dreyfus, Alfred, Jean Calas' Case compared to, ii, 188
Dreyfus affair, ii, 205
Dresden, ii, 65
Drury Lane Theatre, i, 247; Voltaire visiting, i, 164
Dryden, i, 153, 165
Dubois, Abbé, i, 80
Dubois, Cardinal, Voltaire's letter to, i, 120f.
Dubois—Reymond, i, 17, 387
Duc de Foix, i, 262
Duclos, Mademoiselle, i, 71, 72, 73; ii, 128f.
Dufay, M. de, i, 388
Dufay, Madame de, i, 109
Dufresne, Quinault, i, 229ff., 246, 262; playing in *Œdipe*, i, 102
Dujarry, Abbé, i, 74
Dumay, Madame, i, 111
Dumesnil, Mademoiselle, ii, 9
Dumonceau, ii, 263f.
Dunkerque, i, 319
Dunois, i, 332ff., 344
Dunoyer, Madame, i, 62, 63, 70
Dunoyer, Olympe, Voltaire's letters to, i, 65, 66ff.; Voltaire's love affair with, i, 63-69; Voltaire on, i, 70; Voltaire's plans to elope with, i, 65
Dupin, General, ii, 29
Duplessis—Mornay, i, 153
Dupuits, Mademoiselle, ii, 316, 339
Duras, Duke de, ii, 26
Duse, Eleonora, i, 219

Electra, ii, 50
Eléments de la Philosophie de Newton, i, 17, 358, 361, 363f., 375, 385; Desfontaines on, i, 366; publication forbidden in France, i, 364
Elisabeth Charlotte, i, 87, 99, 102
Elizabeth of Russia, ii, 12, 165, 240, 242, 245, 331; death of, ii, 247f.; wedding of, ii, 3
Eloge de Louis XV., i, 271
Encyclopedia, ii, 30f., 82, 90, 117f.; Voltaire collaborates on, ii, 118
England, Dutch propose to aid, ii, 32f.; Voltaire's impression of, i, 182; Voltaire on, i, 176f.
England's History, ii, 155
English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, i, 74
Enule, ii, 96, 97, 98, 202
Enville, Duchess d', ii, 149, 192, 196, 300
Eon, Chevalier d', ii, 331
Epernon, i, 141
Epinay, Madame d', ii, 85, 87, 92; life of, ii, 128f.; on Voltaire, ii, 129
Epistle of Defamation, i, 137
Epistle to the Prince of Vendôme, i, 75
Epître à Boileau, i, 30, 84
Epitre à Monsieur le duc d'Orléans, i, 91
Epître à M. le duc de Sully, i, 60
Epître a trois imposteurs, ii, 308

Epître au Cardinal Dubois, i, 118
Epître à Uranie, i, 122ff., 250; ii, 223, 224; ii, 104
Eriphyle, i, 218, 244ff.
Esclavelles, d' Louise, Tardieu d', *see* Madame d'Epinay.
Esperandieu, Monsieur d' ii, 209, 211
Espinas, Jeanne Pierre, i, 11; Voltaire frees, ii, 207
Espinasse, Mlle. de l', i, 383; ii, 124
Essay on Criticism, i, 173
Essai sur la Poésie Epique, i, 165, 185
Essay on Man, i, 174ff.
Essai sur les Môeurs, i, 19, 334
Estrées, Gabrielles d', i, 30
Etallonde, Gaillard d', ii, 296, 299, *See also* Morival; ii, 300, 301; arrest of, ii, 222; sentence of, ii, 225
Etoiles, Alexandrine d', i, 324; death of, ii, 22; dines with the King, ii, 20; *see also* Poisson and Pompadour; famous men entertained at, ii, 19
Eugene, Prince, i, 134, 201, 268, 272
Euler, i, 17, 388
Eulogy of Despréaux, ii, 334
Eureaux, Count d', ii, 27
Eymeric, Nicolas, ii, 189

Fabrice, Mr., i, 207ff.
Facéties, ii, 137
Fagel, i, 207
Faguet, on Voltaire, i, 4
Falconnet, statue by, ii, 27
Falkener, Everard, i, 160, 176; ii, 32; letter to Voltaire, i, 170; Voltaire and, i, 169ff.
Femmes Savantes, i, 217
Fénélon, i, 124
Ferdinand, Duke, i, 221
Feriol, Madame de, i, 52, 156; ii, 124; Adrienne Lecouvreur's letter to, i, 225ff.
Feriol, Monsieur de, ii, 124
Ferney, i, 165, 187, 308; ii, 81, 99, 152, 276, 28, 296f., 308, 311, 312, 314, 315, 316, 317, 320, 321, 329, 332, 338, 339, 343, 348, 350, 351, 352; Protestant clergymen come to, ii, 220; Voltaire buys estate in, ii, 91; Voltaire purchases, ii, 134, 135
Fête de Bélébat, i, 246
Fierville, i, 209
Fiesc, Lozeran de, i, 388
Figaro, ii, 285
Fitz-James, i, 320ff.
Flanders, defeated by Maurice of Saxony, i, 223; King joins army in, ii, 20
Flavacourt, Monsieur de, i, 277
Flavacourt, Madame de, i, 286, 292, 323; ii, 23; Madame de, Louis XV's secret correspondence with, i, 317
Fleury, Cardinal de, i, 147ff., 215, 238, 282ff., 300f., 362; ii, 155; death of, i, 291
Fleury, Duchess de, i, 283
Florian, Marquis de, ii, 275; Voltaire's letter to, ii, 281, 286
Fontainebleau, i, 36, 279, 385, 402; ii, 30, 36, 50, 85; Voltaire at, i, 143ff.
Fontaine-Martel, Countess de, i, 244f., 252f., 258
Fontenelle, i, 17, 39, 111, 134, 175, 194f., 216f., 246, 274; ii, 19f., 109, 160, 269; on *Mérope*, ii, 9
Fontenoy, i, 170; battle of, i, 223; victory of, ii, 12f., 16, 31f.
Forclaquier, Count de, i, 254
Forges, Voltaire and Richelieu at, i, 140
Fort l'Evêque, i, 236f.; ii, 7
Fouquet, i, 76, 280, 282
Fox, Charles James, i, 189
Fragments historiques sur l'Inde et sur le général Lally, ii, 295, 302
France, Anatole, disciple of Voltaire, ii, 93
Franceuil, Madame d'Epinay falls in love with, ii, 128
Franche-Comté, i, 312; ii, 290
Francine, M. de, i, 132
Francis, i, 10, 36, 75; ii, 187
Frankfurt, Voltaire arrested in, ii, 74; Marshal Belle-Isle in, i, 281
Franklin, Dr., i, 165; ii, 323, 344; Voltaire and, i, 7
Frederica, Mademoiselle, ii, 263, 264
Frederica, Wilhelmina, Margravine, i, 311
Frederick the Great, i, 7, 20, 117f., 125, 241, 275, 338f., 353, 387, 403; ii, 4, 5, 15, 66, 79, 86, 105, 110, 119, 135, 142, 201, 219, 231f., 240 242, 247, 249, 256, 260, 262f., 300, 349, 351f.; alliance with France, i, 314; epigram on Madame du Châtelet, ii, 56; has Voltaire arrested in Frankfurt, ii, 74; letters to Voltaire, i, 224; ii, 52f., 60, 67, 75f., 230, 288, 297; life as Crown Prince, i,

296ff.; Madame de la Tournelle's letter to, i, 315; on France, i, 305; on Madame du Châtelet, i, 299; on Voltaire, i, 61, 303; portrait of, i, 326; Rousseau accepts shelter of, ii, 97; schemes to have Voltaire with him, ii, 57ff.; tribute to Voltaire, ii, 232; tries to protect Rousseau, ii, 101; verses of, ii, 76, 77, 78; Voltaire's correspondence with, i, 298f.; Voltaire on, ii, 62; Voltaire's friendship with, i, 296ff.; Voltaire's changed attitude towards, ii, 75; Voltaire's letters to, i, 306; ii, 53, 57, 156f.; Voltaire's mission to, i, 51, 305f.; Voltaire's negotiations with, i, 308ff.; Voltaire's verses to, ii, 72
Frederick, William, i, 118, 221, 312
Freemasons, ii, 346
French Academy, Voltaire elected to, ii, 33
French army, defeated in Bohemia and Bavaria, i, 281
Freiburg, i, 322
Fréjus, Bishop de, i, 149
Fréret, ii, 109
Fréon, i, 98, 183, 344, 369; ii, 57, 63, 149, 164, 205f., 325; assists Jean François Corneille, ii, 161; Voltaire slandered by, ii, 163
Frilett, i, 9
Fronsac, Duke de, i, 49
Fryxell, i, 104

Galaizière, Chancellor, ii, 39
Galiani, ii, 116
Galigai, Eleonore, i, 342
Galileo, i, 16; ii, 109
Gallet-Duplessis, ii, 213, 238
Garduch, Marquis de, ii, 237
Garrick, i, 191
Gaucourt, M. de, i, 333
Gaultier, Abbé, ii, 322, 327, 328, 329
Gaussin, Mlle., i, 251
Gautier, Theophile, ii, 136
Gay, i, 160, 173, 177
Gazette de Berne, ii, 303
Gedanken über Jesu Christi Höllenfahrt, i, 74
Gédoyn, Abbé Nicholas, i, 31, 33
Geneva, organization for defence of Calas family formed in, ii, 192; participation in Voltaire's theatrical performances forbidden in, ii, 95; Voltaire in, ii, 86
Genlis, Countess de, on Voltaire, i, 22
Genoa, Richelieu in, i, 269
Genonville, Lefèvre de la Faluère de, ii, 342; Voltaire's epistles to, i, 96f., 103
Gentilhomme ordinaire de la chambre, Voltaire's title of, ii, 28, 35
Geoffrin, Madame, ii, 218; salon of, ii, 116
Geoffroy, Joseph, i, 235
Géographie, i, 382
George I., i, 162, 167, 197, 209
George II., i, 171f., 209, 359
George Barwell or the Merchant of London, i, 183
Georgica, ii, 34
Gervasi, i, 97; Voltaire's Epître XXV to, i, 53; Voltaire's letter to, i, 159f.
Gesvres, Duke de, i, 141, 147
Gibbon, ii, 116; on Voltaire, ii, 130f.
Gildon, Charles, i, 190
Girard, i, 336ff.
Gluck, ii, 322, 323
Goethe, i, 4, 16, 18, 74f., 193, 250, 296; ii, 93, 104, 281; Voltaire compared to, ii, 10f.
Goézman, Louis, ii, 283, 284, 286
Goézman, Madame, ii, 283, 284
Goltz, Baron von, ii, 352
Gondrin, Madame de, i, 90f.
Gordon, Duke of ii, 165
Görtz, Baron, i, 104f., 206; in parley with Sweden, i, 207ff.
Gour-Holland, i, 33, 34
Gourné, Abbé, i, 382f.
Gouvernet, Marquis Charles Frédéric de la Tour du Pin de, i, 98
Gouvernet, Marquise Latour du Pin, ii, 342, 349
Gouzet, Abbé, i, 266
Gozzi, Count Carlo, *Zaïre* translated into Italian by, i, 248
Graffigny, Huguet de, i, 392
Graffigny, Madame de, i, 325, 393; ii, 36; visit in Cirey, i, 325, 393ff.
Grafton, Duke of, ii, 196
Grammont, Duchess of, i, 295; ii, 262, 265, 267
Grammont, Duke of, i, 280; Count of, i, 280
Grandier, Urbain, i, 342
Grandval, i, 229
Gray, George, i, 187
Gresset, i, 340
Grévin, Jacques, i, 266
Grimm, Baron, ii, 92, 116, 128, 205f., 218, 257, 300, 336; Cath-

erine's letter to, ii, 260; Madame d'Epinay defended by, ii, 129; Madame d'Epinay's letter to, ii, 130
Grisbourdon, i, 342
Gros chien, i, 393
Guébriant, Marquis de, Madame du Châtelet's love affair with, i, 256
Guez, i, 100
Guibaudet, ii, 17
Guibert, Monsieur de, ii, 125; Mademoiselle de L'Epinasse's love for, ii, 117
Guiche, i, 90
Guise, Louise Henriette Françoise de, i, 140, 229, 263
Guise, Marie de, i, 263ff., 322
Guise, Duke de, i, 244, 263ff.
Gulliver's Travels, i, 175
Gustav III., i, 311
Guyot, i, 344
Gyllembourg, Count, ii, 244

Hableau du Siècle, i, 239
Haller, Voltaire's letter to, ii, 312f.
Hamlet, i, 189f., 192, 201
Happiness, i, 404
Happoncourt, d'Issembourg d', i, 392
Harcourt, Count d', ii, 149, 192
Harlequin on Parnassus, i, 247
Harnoy, Dompierre d', ii, 347
Hastings, i, 199
Hausset, Madame de, ii, 29
Hay, Lord Charles, i, 223
Heine, Heinrich, ii, 93, 104; Voltaire compared to, i, 15
Hellin, i, 359
Helvétius, i, 183; ii, 84, 146, 202, 224; Voltaire's letter to, ii, 100
Héméry, d', i, 340
Henault, President, i, 58, 144; ii, 10, 119, 263, 325; criticism of Voltaire's history, ii, 154, 155; on Cirey, ii, 9; on Madame d'Etoiles, ii, 18
Henriade, i, 4, 35, 45, 83, 95, 124ff., 147, 153, 159, 165, 171, 186, 199, 217, 344, 370, 375, 379; ii, 96, 107; Bolingbroke praising, i, 116; dedication of, to Regent, i, 115f.; Pope praising, i, 174; publication of, in England, i, 198; secret printing in Rouen, i, 168; subscription for, in England, i, 196f.; Voltaire withdrawing from stage, i, 117
Henry II., ii, 187
Henry III., i, 126
Henri IV., i, 160, 190f.
Henry IV., i, 30, 36f., 95, 126f., 197; ii, 187, 306, 355
Henry VIII, i, 191; ii, 306
Henry, Prince, i, 340
Héraclius, ii, 323
Hérault, Réné, i, 150f., 154, 156, 235, 251, 263; ii, 19, 188; saving manuscripts of *Henriade*, i, 116
Herder, ii, 93
Hermann, Professor, ii, 68
Héron, i, 107
Hérouville, Count d', ii, 339
Hertz, Edward, ii, 222
Hervey, Lord, Voltaire on, i, 172
Herwart, i, 106
Hessen-Cassel, Count of, ii, 218
Hill, Aaron, i, 247
Hirschel, Abraham, ii, 66; Voltaire's business dealings with, ii, 65
Histoire de mon temps, i, 313
Histoire des Oracles, i, 195
Histoire du Parlament de Paris, etc., i, 108, 269, 270
Historiographe de France, Voltaire's appointment as, ii, 28
History of Ancient Rome, ii, 155
History of Charles XII, i, 19, 161, 209ff.; ii, 79
History of France, ii, 155
History of Mero and Enegu, i, 175
History of Peter the Great, ii, 79, 251
Hobbes, ii, 132
Högger, i, 262
Holbach, ii, 230, 257
Holberg, i, 135
Holland, ii, 24
Holstein, Charles XII invading, i, 212
Holstein, Duke of *See* Peter III.
Homer, Maupertuis compared with, ii, 69
Horace, i, 236; Voltaire compared to, i, 20
Hôtel de Charost, ii, 10
Hôtel Lambert, Madame du Châtelet purchases, ii, 5
Hôtel Pontchartrain, ii, 27
Houdetot, Vicomtesse de, Rousseau in love with, ii, 91, 92
Houdon, i, 14, 22; ii, 350, 353, 360
House of Commons, i, 114, 201
Howard, Henrietta, i, 171
Hudibrae, i, 184
Hughes, i, 177
Hugo, Victor, i, 8, 21, 34f., 73, 166, 369; ii, 136; de Musset and Voltaire and Rousseau compared to, ii, 104
Huguenots, i, 62, 63, 78, 124f.

Hume, David, ii, 116, 120, 309; Rousseau befriended by, ii, 102f.

Ibsen, Henrik, ii, 7
Iliad, i, 125, 186
Indian Company, i, 108
Inès de Castro, i, 133, 370
Inferno, i, 342
Institutions de Physique, i, 347ff.
Introduction métaphysique, i, 349
Iphigenie, ii, 50
Irène, ii, 317, 324, 326, 332f., 336ff.
Isaac Newton's Mathematical Principles of natural Philosophy, ii, 9
Ivan, Prince, ii, 253

J'ai vu, i, 103
Jansenistic Parliament, ii, 202
Jansenists, i, 337; Voltaire and, i, 43; ii, 220
Jacques le Fataliste, III., ii, 201
Jacquier, Père François, ii, 9
Jancourt, Marquis de, ii, 322
Jeanne, i, 396f., 400ff.
Jeannot et Collin, i, 194
Jeffrey, i, 206
Jeliotte, ii, 17
Jesuit party, ii, 187
Jesuitism, Voltaire and, i, 43
Jesuits, expelled from France, ii, 202; Voltaire in school of, i, 40f.; Voltaire on, i, 44; persecution of, ii, 188
Johnson, Samuel, i, 173
Jordan, Frederick the Great's letter to, i, 301, 303
Jore, i, 218, 246, 267, 366
Josserand, Jean Baptiste, ii, 268, 269
Journal de Paris, ii, 8, 324, 333, 349
Journal de politique et de littérature, ii, 309
Journal des Savants, i, 147, 370
Jugement de Pluton, i, 137
Jugements sur les Ouvrages, nouveaux, i, 383
Julius Cæsar, i, 191
Jully, Madame de, ii, 129

Katte, execution of, i, 297
Kehl, edition, ii, 352
Keith, George, ii, 61
Keith, Lord, ii, 97, 101
Kendal, Duchess of, i, 114
Kepler, i, 16
King Lear, i, 190ff.
König, quarrel between Maupertuis and, ii, 68
König, i, 347f.
Königsmarck, Countess Aurora, i, 220ff.
Kowalewska, Sonja, i, 351
Küstrin, i, 297

La Barre, Chevelier de, ii, 219ff., 229, 231, 232, 233, 268, 270, 273, 275, 296f., 300, 305, 351, 358; accusations against, ii, 223; arrest of, 222; sentence of, ii, 225f.
La Bastille, i, 94f.
La Beaumelle, i, 70, 212, 344, 369
La Blache, Count de, ii, 282, 283, 284, 285
La Borde, ii, 165
La Briffe, Monsieur de, i, 265, 267
La Bruyère, Monsieur de, i, 67, 106, 124; ii, 200; on judicial corruption, i, 9
La Ceinture Magique, i, 132
La Champoneslé, i, 218, 240
La Chambre de Justice, i, 107
La Chassaigne, ii, 336
La Châtre, i, 287
La Compagne d'Occident, John Law founding, i, 81
La Crepinade, i, 136
Lady Inger of Ostrat, ii, 7
La Fare, i, 149; Voltaire on, i, 60
La Faye, i, 133
Lafayette, i, 183
La Féte de Bélébat, i, 144, 150
La Feuillade, i, 119
Lafontaine, i, 16, 106, 124, 193
La Fresnaye, i, 149
Lagni, Mlle. de, i, 330
Lagrange-Chancels, i, 89
Lagrenée, ii, 116
La Guerre civile de Genéve, ii, 102
La Harpe, ii, 236, 317, 323, 329, 352; Voltaire's criticism compared to, ii, 166
La Houlière, Marchand de, ii, 347
Lally-Tollendal, Count Thomas Arthur de, ii, 270, 291, 295, 302; ii, 291-296; execution of, 295; death of, 303
La Ligue, see Henriade.
Lamet, ii, 264
La Mettrie, ii, 61, 67
Lamoignon, Chancellor, ii, 192
La Mort de César, i, 192, 218, 359, 372; suppression of, i, 303
La Mort de Mlle. Lecouvreur, célébre actrice, i, 73, 241f.
La Mortrayes, i, 209
La Motte, Louis de, ii, 221
La Motte, Moriceau de, ii, 107
La-Motte-au-Fées, i, 25

La Motte-Houdart, Antoine de, i, 74, 133, 147, 246, 274, 370; on Voltaire, i, 103
La Muette, i, 88, 279
Landes, ii, 211; Sirven sentenced to be hanged by, ii, 214
L'Ane littéraise, etc., ii, 164
Langlade, ii, 306
Languet, refusing burial of Adrienne Lecouvreur, i, 237f.
L'Anti-Giton, i, 72, 74, 150
La Noue, ii, 5, 50
La Nouvelle Heloise, ii, 93, 95, 96
La Philosophie de l'histoire par feu l'Abbé Bazin, ii, 254
La Pivardière, ii, 307
Lapland, expeditions into, ii, 62
La Pluralité des Mondes, i, 17, 111
La Prude, i, 173
La Pucelle, i, 311, 330ff., 335, 337ff., 358, 363; ii, 80, 100, 105, 224; Casanova's criticism of Voltaire's, ii, 133; Chapelain's, ii, 133
La Quintessence, i, 63f.
La Religieuse en Chemise, ii, 224
Largillière, i, 96; ii, 342
La Rochefoucauld, i, 323; ii, 108
La Rochette, Moreau de, ii, 313, 314
Lorry, ii, 329
L'Art Poetique, i, 173, 253
La Salpetrière, ii, 108, 269
La Source, i, 115f., 159; Voltaire at, i, 113f.
La Suze, Madame de, i, 331
La Tour, *see* Bourbon, Duke de
Latour, Father de, i, 256; Voltair's letter to, i, 44
La Tournelle, Marquis de, i, 285ff.
La Tournelle, Marquise de, i, 286ff., 302, 305, 310, 313ff., 319ff., 324; death of, i, 324; Fleury and Maurepas attacking, i, 290f.; Frederick's letter to, i, 314f.
La Trémoille, M. de, i, 287
Lauraguais, Count de, on Voltaire, ii, 149; visits Voltaire, ii, 148
Lauraguais, Duchess of i, 292f., 317; ii, 23, 148
Laurent, i, 132
Lauzun, i, 49, 88
Laval, i, 239
La Vallière, Duke de, i, 90, 340; ii, 30, 122, 280
Lavaysse, Gaubert, ii, 175, 181, 185, 194, 204
Lavoisier, i, 17
La voix du Curé, ii, 290
La Voltairomanie, i, 368, 375, 380f.
Lavoy, i, 240
La Vrillières, M. de, i, 94; ii, 268
Law, John, i, 79, 104; ii, 64; regulating France's finances, i, 79, 80, 81, 82; Voltaire attacking, i, 83, 84
La Wasprie, etc., ii, 164
Le Blanc, i, 118f., 247
Le Bourbier, i, 58, 74, 103
Lebrun, Antoine Louis, i, 93; ii, 5, 164; verse to Marie Corneille, ii, 161
Le Cadenas, i, 74
Le Camus, Abbé ii, 233
Le Christianesme dévoilé, ii, 268f.
Le Cid, ii, 162
Le Cocuage, i, 74
L'Ecole des Femmes, i, 406
Le Contrat Social, ii, 96
Le Coq, i, 54
L'Ecossaise, i, 98; Casanova's translation of, ii, 133
Le Cousin de Mahomet, ii, 225
Lecouvreur, Adrienne, i, 53, 117, 152ff., 216; death of, i, 218, 237; last appearance of, i, 236f.; life of, i, 219ff; love for Maurice of Saxony, i, 223; Voltaire on, i, 23
Lecuyer, Jean, ii, 268, 269
Le Désastre de Lisbonne, ii, 88, 113
Le Dépontaire, i, 33
Ledet, i, 359, 365
Le Devin de Village, ii, 30, 85
Le Diner du comte de Boulainvilliers, ii, 233
Le Docteur, i, 393
Lefèvre, Voltaire supporting, i, 259
Lefevbre, Jean François. *See* La Barre.
Le fils naturel, ii, 92
Le Florentin, i, 218, 236
Legouré, i, 219
Le Grand, i, 219, 240
Leibnitz, i, 18, 20, 174, 197, 203f., 346ff.; ii, 68, 88
Leipziger Zeitung, ii, 73
Lejay, Father, i, 49, 73, 219; ii, 283f.; Voltaire's dislike for, i, 43
Le Kain, quoted, ii, 56f.
Lelex, ii, 303
Le Lutrin, i, 173
Le Malade Imaginaire, i, 236
Le méprise d'Arras, ii, 278
Le Misanthrope, i, 173
Lemoine, i, 186; ii, 116
Le mercure français, ii, 269
Le Mondain, i, 350, 356ff., 368, 375, 405

Lenclos, Ninon de, i, 31, 34; family Arouet and, i, 17; Voltaire visiting, i, 32, 33; supporting Voltaire, i, 33
L'Enfant prodigue, i, 260, 374; ii, 131
L'Envieux, rejected, i, 368
Leonardo, i, 18
Leonce, ii, 337
Lepell, Molly, i, 172
Lepelletier-Desfort, Comptroller General, i, 109, 216
Le Portatif, ii, 221, 225f.
Le Portier des Chartreux, ii, 224
Le Pour et le Contre, i, 122
Le Préservatif, i, 367f., 375, 381
L'Equivoque, ii, 275
Le Roi, Professor, Voltaire's letter to, ii, 238
Les Barmécides, ii, 317
Les Bijoux Indiscrets, i, 240, 340
Les Charactères, i, 9, 182
Les Délices, ii, 123, 130, 134f., 194; Voltaire buys, ii, 86, 111; Voltaire sells, ii, 91
Les deux Amours, i, 122
Le Sentiment des Citoyens, ii, 100
Les J'ai vue, i, 93
Les Lois de Minos, ii, 258
Lespar, i, 90
Les Petits Appartements, ii, 21
Les peuples aux parlements, ii, 275
Les Philippiques, i, 89
L'Espinasse, Julie de, ii, 116f., 325; D'Alembert's friendship with, ii, 115; Madame du Deffand's friendship with, ii, 115; love letters of, ii, 117; death of, 117
Les Plaideurs, i, 121; ii, 201
Les Précieuses ridicules, i, 331
L'Esprit des Lois, ii, 29, 96, 244
Les Provinciales, ii, 109
Les Saisons, i, 393; ii, 47
L'Essai sur les mœurs, ii, 158
Lesseville, Monsieur de, i, 29
Lessing, i, 175, 250; ii, 136; on *Mérope* première, ii, 8; on Voltaire, i, 5; *Zaïre* translated into German by, i, 248
Le Sueur, ii, 5
Le Sultan Misopouf, etc., ii, 225
Les Tenèbres, i, 40
Les Vous et les Tu, i, 96
Leszcynska, Maria, i, 146ff., 213, 294f.; ii, 19, 22; chosen Queen of France, i, 142ff.; granting Voltaire pension, i, 145; marriage to Louis XV, i, 143; on Madame de Pompadour, ii, 263
Leszcynsky, Stanislaw, i, 142, 209ff., 217, 267f., 393
Leszcynsky, flight of family, to Posen, i, 213
Le Tartuffe, ii, 6
Le Temple, i, 57, 60, 77, 85, 219
Le Temple de la Gloire, ii, 359; Voltaire writes to commemorate Fontenoy, ii, 32
Le Temple du Gôut, i, 54, 59, 136, 241, 253f., 262
Le Théâtre des Petits Appartements, ii, 26
Letter from Frederick the Great to Rousseau, ii, 103
Letter to Dr. Pansophe, ii, 103
Letter of a Quaker, ii, 99
Letters, of Maupertuis, ii, 70
Letters Concerning the English Nation, i, 200
Lettres on England, i, 188
Letters on the Drama, ii, 90
Lettre de cachet, Count D'Argenson receives, ii, 122; explanation of, i, 11
Lettre de Donat Calas, etc., ii, 195
Lettres de la Campagne, ii, 98
Lettres de la Montagne, ii, 99, 101
Lettre d'un jeune Abbé, etc., ii, 275
Lettre sur les Auteurs Anglais, i, 195
Lettres de la Montaigne, i, 15; ii, 99
Lettres Historiques et Galantes, i, 64
Lettres Persanes, i, 340
Lettres Peruviennes, i, 393
Lettres Philosophiques, i, 172, 175, 193ff., 199, 266, 272, 375, 379; ii, 72, 83, 107, 223; Voltaire denying authorship of, i, 302
Levasseur, Thérèse, ii, 92, 95, 97, 100f., 103; Rousseau and, ii, 85
L'Exchange, i, 399
Leyden, i, 359
Leynault, i, 154
Leyrit, Duval de, ii, 292
L'Homme aux quarante écus, ii, 268f.
L'Homme personnel, ii, 317
L'Hôte et l'Hôstesse, ii, 338
L'Hôtel de Mantes, i, 217
Life of Jean Baptiste Rousseau, i, 136ff.
Ligne, Prince de, i, 21; ii, 249, 250, 259; description of Voltaire, ii, 151; on Louis XIV, i, 36
Lille, Louis XV in, i, 318; Voltaire visits, ii, 5
Lillo, George, i, 183
Linant, Abbé Michael, i, 257f.; Voltaire on, i, 259; Voltaire supporting, i, 258f.

L'Indiscret, i, 143, 145, 245
Linguet, petition of, ii, 229
Lisbon, earthquake in, i, 174; ii, 88
Literary Paradoxes, i, 147
Lives of the English Poets, i, 189
Livry, Suzanne Cathérine Gravet de Corsembleu de, i, 96, 117, 144, 344; ii, 342; life of, i, 97ff.
Lixin, i, 265
Loche, i, 178ff., 200, 204, 347; ii, 196; doctrine of, i, 180
Loire, Marie Anne, i, 256
London Stock Exchange, i, 201
Longchamp, ii, 54; comments on Madame du Châtelet, i, 383f.; serves Madame du Châtelet, ii, 45f.
Longueuil, Jean René de, Marquis des Maisons, i, 52, 53
Longueville, Duke of, i, 330
Lope de Vega, i, 188
L'Orphelin de la Chine, ii, 147
Lorraine, Voltaire's flight to, i, 267
Lorraine, Cauel of, ii, 47f.
Lorraine, Duke de, i, 220, 265, 273, 392
Lorraine, Louise de, i, 219
Louis, II., i, 296
Louis XI., ii, 306
Louis XII., ii, 187, 306
Louis XIII, i, 34, 37, 73, 129, 342
Louis XIV., i, 15, 16, 51, 73ff., 85, 88f., 114, 119, 124ff., 129, 146, 183, 192, 201, 207, 224, 238, 253, 277, 304, 330ff.; ii, 4, 26, 121, 154f., 341; court of, 56f.; death of, i, 77, 78; Paris architecture under, i, 36
Louis XV., i, 23, 38, 51, 140, 147ff., 201, 215, 235, 274-324, 393; ii, 9, 12, 15, 17, 26, 26, 30, 58, 77, 79, 106, 110, 122, 148, 165, 187, 196, 203, 258, 264ff., 268, 272f., 282, 291, 297ff., 302; alliance with Prussia, i, 314; commuting Carlier's sentence, i, 9; Damien's attack upon, i, 11; death of, ii, 299; disinterest in politics, i, 291; evicting Madame de Mailly, i, 289; ill in Metz, i, 320ff.; letter of, to Maurepas, ii, 28; love affair with Madame de la Tournelle, i, 287ff.; Madame d'Etoiles succeeds in attracting, ii, 20; Madame de la Tournelle's demands of, i, 290; Mlle. de Nestle and, i, 275ff.; marriage of, i, 143; melancholia of, ii, 25; on love, ii, 40; Protestants and, i, 10; stay with French army, i, 316ff.; superstition of, i, 283f.; Voltaire's election to the Academy recommended by, ii, 33; Voltaire snubbed by, ii, 32
Louis XVI., i, 6; ii, 91, 300, 301, 302, 307, 330, 357
Louis XVIII., ii, 338
Louis Quatorze, ii, 158
Louis Quinze, ii, 158
Louis Philippe, ii, 341
Lourdet, i, 31, 139
Louvre, portraits of Madame de Pompadour in, ii, 18
Luc, Count de, i, 134, 279
Lunéville, i, 325, 399; Voltaire visits, ii, 39
Luther, i, 4, 343; ii, 104; Voltaire, compared to, i, 22
Luxembourg, Duchess de, ii, 8
Luxembourg, Marshal de, ii, 92
Luynes, Cardinal de, ii, 19
Luynes, Duke de, ii, 19
Luynes, Duchess de, ii, 19, 22; Pompadour's letter to, ii, 23
Lyttleton, Lord, ii, 165

Macbeth, i, 190ff.
Maçon, Messire Robert de, i, 333
Madame de Maintenon et Mademoiselle de Lenclos, i, 34
Madras, ii, 293
Mahomet, i, 99, 183; success of, in Lile, ii, 3, 5ff., 12, 49f., 81; suppression of, i, 303
Mailly, Madame de, ii, 17, 20
Maine, Duchess de, i, 88f., 173, 255, 355; ii, 36, 37, 154
Mailly-Nesle, Louise Julie de, Louis XV. and, i, 275; life of, i, 275ff.; Louis XV. and, i, 275ff.
Mailly-Nesle, Marie-Anne de, i, 285ff.; Louis XV. and, 286ff.
Maintenon, Madame de, i, 87, 93, 115; ii, 121; influence on Court of Louis XV., i, 57; Racine's letter to, ii, 109
Mairan, Monsieur de, i, 348ff.; ii, 116
Maisons, Jean René de Longueuil, Marquis des, i, 52; Voltaire on death of, i, 54
Maistre, Joseph de, on Voltaire, ii, 199
Malesherbes, ii, 164
Manheim, General, i, 67
Manuel des Inquisiteurs, ii, 189
Marais-Saint-Germain, rue de, i, 238
Marat, ii, 308, 309, 310
Marche, Fyot de la, i, 52, 55
Marcus Aurelius, ii, 62

Marianne, i, 117, 145, 217; première of, i, 139
Marie Theresia, i, 281; ii, 9, 78
Marie, Antoinette, ii, 331, 333, 338, 357
Marie, Queen, i, 171
Mariette, ii, 193
Marin, François, ii, 285, 286
Marivaux, ii, 116
Marlborough, i, 114, 162, 207; Bolingbroke on, i, 15
Marlborough, Duchess of i, 207; ii, 154
Marly Park, ii, 29
Marmontel, Jean François, ii, 29f., 116, 322
Maroquin, i, 393
Marsais, de, ii, 149
Martel, Madame de, *see* Fontaine-Martel.
Marthe, Abbé, ii, 322
Martin, accusation of, ii, 271; execution of, 272
Massarille, Marquis, ii, 327
Masson, Chevalier, ii, 110
Mauconseil, M. de, i, 144
Mauléon, Marie Catherine Daumart de, mother of Voltaire, i, 26
Maupeon, ii, 267, 268, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 278, 279, 282, 286, 295, 296, 298, 299, 302
Maupertuis, Moreau de, i, 183, 203, 265, 274, 326ff., 346ff., 386ff.; ii, 19f., 58f., 62, 67, 73; quarrel between König and, ii, 68; Voltaire ridicules, ii, 68, 70; ii, 7, 24, 300, 351; antagonism to Madame de Pompadour, ii, 27f.; downfall of, ii, 28; Madame du Châtelet's esteem for, i, 32f.; Madame du Châtelet's letter to, i, 330, 387f.; Voltaire jealous of, i, 329; Voltaire's letter to, i, 389
Maurepas, Minister, i, 95, 107, 216, 286, 290, 293f., 302, 314, 316, 323; Fleury and, freeing Madame de Tencin, i, 150; *Memoirs* of, i, 229
Maurice of Saxony, i, 220ff., 227, 229; invading Poland, i, 213f.
Mazarin, Madame de, i, 286, 288
Measure for Measure, i, 191
Medici, Marie de, i, 342
Meilhans, Sénac de, ii, 110
Mélanges, ii, 30
Memmon, ii, 37
Mémoire de Donat Calas, etc., ii, 195
Mémoire du Sieur de Voltaire, i, 136
Mémoire sur la Satire, i, 136
Mémoirs, Beaumarchais, ii, 285, 286
Mémoirs, Casanova's, ii, 131
Mémoirs, Gibbon's, ii, 130f.
Mémoirs, Hénault's, ii, 9
Mémoirs, Voltaire's, ii, 75
Mémoires pour servir à la vie de Monsieur de Voltaire, ii, 351
Memorandum for the complete abolition of Serfdom in France, ii, 303
Ménage, Madame, ii, 149
Méré, Ferrand de, i, 193; letter of, ii, 35
Mérope, i, 45f., 394ff.; ii, 318; compared to Ibsen, ii, 7; premiere of, ii, 7, 8
Merville, Guyot de, i, 69
Mesnault, i, 193
Methuen, Lord, ii, 154; King's illness in, ii, 10
Metz, Louis XV. in, i, 319ff.
Meuse, Count de, i, 284
Mézeran, ii, 155
Mézerei, quoted, ii, 290
Michel, Voltaire's epigram on, ii, 5
Michel Angelo, i, 21
Michelet, i, 78
Micromégas, i, 19, 175; ii, 37, 141
Midsummer Night's Dream, A, ii, 11
Mignard, Pierre, praised by Molière, i, 39
Mignot, Abbé, ii, 56, 193, 346ff.; removing Voltaire's body, i, 28, 29
Mignot, François, i, 28
Mignot, Madame, i, 108
Milton, Deborah, i, 184ff., 197, 342
Mimeure, Marquis de, i, 55, 112
Mimeure, Marquise de, i, 56
Minorca, defeat of England at, ii, 126
Mirabeau, Marquis de, ii, 109, 356
Mirepoix, Bishop of, *see also* Boileau; ii, 33; i, 295, 302, 305; opposes Madame d'Etoiles, ii, 20
Mississippi Company, i, 84
Mitau, Diet of, i, 222
Mithridate, i, 168, 192, 208
Modena, Duke de, i, 113
Moïsiade, i, 31, 139
Moisnel, ii, 223, 225, 29; arrest of, ii, 222
Molé, Madame, ii, 324
Molière, i, 16, 21, 22, 86, 100, 119, 153, 172f., 178, 193, 217, 223, 228f., 355 395, 406; ii, 33, 69, 91; on Minon de Lenclos, i, 33; praising Pierre Mignard, i, 39

Monbran—Villafranche, Madame Voltaire's letter to, i, 72; Voltaire compared to, ii, 10f.
Monjeu, i, 265ff.
Mollwitz, battle of, ii, 5
Monrion, Voltaire spends winter at, ii, 123
Montaigne, i, 86
Montauron, i, 106
Montbailli, Madame, ii, 277, 278; arrest of, ii, 277; execution of, ii, 278
Montbelliard, Prince of, i, 102
Montespan, Madame de, i, 289; ii, 38
Montesquieu, i, 183, 274, 340; ii, 29, 96, 187, 244
Montgommeri, Count de, ii, 307
Montlosier, Count of, ii, 334
Montmart, Duke de, i, 145
Montmorency, ii, 97; Rousseau visits, ii, 92
Monvel, ii, 333
Mora, Marquis de, Mademoiselle de L'Espinasse's love for, ii, 117
Morellet, Abbé, ii, 189
Morgan, Lady, ii, 345
Morival, ii, 296, 297, 298; Voltaire's letter to, ii, 201f.
Morley, John, on Voltaire, i, 13
Mortemer, Jeanne de, i, 333
Morville, M. de, French Foreign Minister, recommending Voltaire, i, 160
Motiers, Rousseau flees from, ii, 101; Rousseau in, 98
Mouhy, Chevalier de i, 367, 380
Mouchy, Duchess de, i, 87
Mouret, i, 262f
Moussinot, Abbé, i, 70, 380
Mouval, i, 239
Moyland, Castle, i, 301
Mühlberg, camp at, i, 229
Müler, Paulan, i, 13
Munschenbrock, i, 386
Musset, i, 159

Nangins, accident at, ii, 38
Nanine, ii, 337
Napoleon Bonaparte, i, 4, 23
Narva, battle at, i, 212
Nassau, Countess of, ii, 123
Nassau-Saarbrücken, Princess of, ii, 218
Nathan der Weise, i, 175, 250
Nattier, i, 256, 286, 293
Nature and Diffusion of Fire, i, 386
Néaulme, Jean, ii, 105
Necker, Madame, ii, 323; plan to erect statue to Voltaire, ii, 103
Nemeitz, J. C., i, 38
Nero, ii, 306
Nestle, Louise Julie de, *see*, Mailly-Nestle
Nestle, Marquis de, i, 275f.
Neufchâtel, ii, 97
Neuville, Countess, i, 260
Newcastle, Duke of, i, 162; Horatio Walpole's letter to, i, 160f.
Newton, Isaac, i, 16ff., 127, 177ff., 184, 200ff., 214, 346ff., 355, 359, 365f., 385f.; ii, 309; Madame du Châtelet's translation of, ii, 52; Maupertuis as defender of, ii, 62
Nicod, ii, 290
Nicolai, i, 26
Night Thoughts, i, 161
Ninon, i, 287
Nivernois, Duke de, ii, 26, 30
Noailles, Gaston Louis de, i, 110, 132, 314, 316, 336; ii, 24, 155; founding *Chambre de Justice*, i, 79
Noce, M. de, i, 215
Nonotte, i, 369
Nordberg, Joran F., i, 209ff.
Normant, Charles Guillaume le, ii, 18
Novum Organum, i, 202
Note sur Monsieur de Voltaire, ii, 56f.

Observations critiques sur le Temple du Goût, i, 372
Observations sur les Ecrits Modernes, i, 367, 382
Ode à la Postérité, i, 138
Ode à Priape, ii, 224
Ode on Ingratitude, i, 136, 374
Odes et Ballades, i, 73
Œdipe, i, 71, 85ff., 98ff., 109, 117, 121, 145, 162, 216ff., 236, 370; ii, 8
Œdipe traveste, i, 121
Oehlenschläger, i, 261; ii, 104
Œuvres complètes de Voltaire, ii, 354
Oldfleld, Anne, i, 178, 242
Old Ranstadt, Charles XII receiving deputies at, i, 207
Olivet, Abbé, i, 47, 274
Ollioules, Convent of, i, 337
Orania, Princess of, i, 347
Oreste, ii, 50, 56
Origin of the Inequalities in Man etc., ii, 86
Orlando Furioso, i, 335
Orléans, Bishop of, ii, 24, 316
Orléans, Philippe of, i, 78, 80, 83, 99, 106, 108, 117, 143; attending première of *Œdipe*, i, 100ff.;

granting Voltaire pension, i, 103; ordering Voltaire's arrest, i, 94; regency of, i, 86ff.
Orloff, Alexis, ii, 249
Orloff, Gregor, ii, 249, 256
Ormesson, President d', ii, 226
Osnabrück, i, 209
Othello, i, 189ff.; ii, 20
Oudry, dining-room in Bellevue painted by, ii, 27
Outline of World History, ii, 106
Oxford, Earl of, i, 197

Palatinate, Elector of, Voltaire's allowance from, ii, 133
Palissy, Bernard, i, 18
Pallu, i, 215
Palmerston, Lord, ii, 165
Pan, Mallet du, ii, 308
Pancoucke, ii, 351
Pandora, ii, 359
Paniatowski, Stanislaw, ii, 248
Panthéon, Voltaire's body stolen from, i, 23
Paparel, i, 107
Parabère, Countess de, i, 87
Paradise Lost, i, 185ff., 342
Pâris, brothers, i, 79, 306; ii, 24, 64; restoring financial order, i, 85
Pâris, deacon, i, 28, 336
Pâris de Montmartel, i, 80
Pâris-Duverney, i, 80, 107, 140, 142, 145ff.; death of, ii, 282; imprisoned in the Bastille, i, 151
Paris, ii, 6, 10; Archbishop of, ii, 353; bridges of, at Voltaire's time, i, 37; Madame de Pompadour's residences in, ii, 27; Parliaments of, i, 337; ii, 220, 229, 269, 270, 271, 273; resignation of Parliaments, 273; La Barre's sentence confirmed by, ii, 227; Voltaire in, ii, 3, 49
Parliament, English, i, 127
Parnell, Thomas, i, 183
Pascal, i, 43, 176; ii, 309; doctrine of, i, 204ff.; on Voltaire, i, 205; Voltaire *versus*, i, 204f.
Pas-de-Cygne, i, 25
Pasquier, ii, 226, 233, 294, 302
Passionei, Cardinal, ii, 153
Pathul, i, 212
Paul I, birth of, ii, 248; Voltaire invited to tutor, ii, 232
Paullon, Father, on Voltaire, i, 40
Paulmy, i, 229
Peace Congress, at Cambrai, Voltaire on, i, 120f.
Pelignac, Jules de, ii, 322
Pélisson, ii, 4
Pensées Diverses sur la Comète, i, 194, 204
Périguy, i, 90
Perrault, i, 31, 38
Périgord, i, 228
Pérusseau, i, 320, 323
Peter the Great, i, 105, 208ff., 212ff., 221ff.; ii, 240, 242ff., 246, 256; affairs of, ii, 247; death of, 249; marriage of, 244
Peterborough, Lord, i, 175; ii, 154
Petrarch, i, 345; ii, 104
Petrus Aurelius, ii, 109
Phèdre, i, 227
Philip V, i, 50, 125
Philips, Ambrose, i, 177
Philippsburg, camp at, i, 268, 271
Physics, Voltaire and, i, 201ff.
Picard, i, 203
Piccini, i, 322, 323
Pictet, ii, 250, 251, 252
Pièces originales concernant la mort des Sieurs Calas etc., ii, 194, 195
Pigalle, ii, 323, 327
Pilote, i, 203
Piper, Prime Minister Count, i, 207f.
Piron, i, 112, 247, 274, 340; ii, 6, 224
Pitt, Andrew, i, 179
Pizarro, i, 356
Place de la Concorde, ii, 333
Place Louis XV, ii, 333, 334
Place Vendôme, ii, 10
Plombières, i, 216, 244, 267, 316; ii, 10
Plutarch, ii, 244
Podewik, Count von, activities as spy, i, 306f.
Poème sur la Loi Naturelle, ii, 107
Poisson, Jeanne Antoinette, ii, 16ff. *See also* d'Etoiles and Pompadour
Poissonades, ii, 24
Poitiers, i, 333
Poitou, ii, 35
Poland, King of. *See* Leszcynsky, Stanislaw.
Polignac, Cardinal de, i, 149, 204, 274
Polignac, Madame de, i, 50
Poltava, battle of, i, 210
Polyeucte, i, 219,, 274ff.; ii, 112
Pompadour, Madame de, i, 275, 324, 340f.; ii, 12, 19, 30, 50, 78ff., 110, 135, 165, 192, 197, 262ff. 282; aids Voltaire's election to the Academy, ii, 33; ambition of, ii, 28; anecdote about, in *Mélanges*,

ii, 30; expenditures of, for building, ii, 27; death of, 263; defends the Queen, ii, 23; diverse attractions of, ii, 25; lack of sophistication of, ii, 21f.; presented to Queen, ii, 22; Louis addresses Madame d'Etoiles as, ii, 21; Louis' tribute to, ii, 26; made a duchess, ii, 28; opinion of Voltaire, ii, 28; plans to lead Voltaire back to Church, ii, 122; pretended conversion of, ii, 121; scheme for raising money, ii, 24; *Tancrède* dedicated to, ii, 29; two accomplishments of, ii, 31; Voltaire's verses to, ii, 34f.
Pondichêry, ii, 292, 293, 294, 296
Poniatowski, i, 209
Pons, Prince de, i, 265
Pont-de-Veyle, Count de, i, 52
Ponteuil, i, 359
Pontoppidan, Henrik, i, 357
Pope, i, 5, 20, 99, 160, 163, 174ff., 347; ii, 309; on Shakespeare, i, 190; Voltaire's admiration of, i, 173f.
Popelinière, Madame de, ii, 19, 23
Poquelin, i, 100
Porée, Father, i, 32; Voltaire on, 44ff.; Voltaire's letter to, i, 45
Porquet, Abbé, i, 393
Potemkin, ii, 256
Potsdam, *Akakia* published in, ii, 71; Voltaire's reception in, ii, 60
Poussin, i, 357
Pradon, ii, 50
Prague, i, 281; occupation of, i, 223
Praugin, Château de, Voltaire lives in, ii, 110
Praslin, Duke de, i, 25; ii, 197, 315
Prault, i, 261
Précis du Siècle de Louis XV, i, 84, 281; ii, 28, 295
Préface de l'Histoire de l'Académie de Sciences, i, 195
Pretender, the, ii, 32
Preuilly, Lady Jeanne de, i, 333
Prevost, Abbé, i, 274, 380
Prie, Marquise de i, 80, 119, 134, 140ff., 235; exiled to Courbépine, i, 151
Princess of Navarre, ii, 11, 28, 32, 83
Principia, i, 17, 385
Prix de la justice et de l'humanité, ii, 303
Project de Dictionnaire, i, 194
Protestantism *vs.* Catholicism, ii, 175-219
Protestants, Edict of Nantes and, i, 10, 11; Voltaire as protector of, ii, 220
Provence, Count de, ii, 338
Prudhomme, i, 169
Prussia, King of, *See* Frederick the Great
Publishing laws, i, 266
Puisieux, M. de, i, 276; ii, 24
Puymorin, ii, 361

Quakers, i, 372; Voltaire and the, i, 194ff.
Quatrième Entretien des Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg, ii, 199
Quintilian, ii, 306

Rabelais, François, i, 201, 253; ii, 108
Racine, i, 16, 21, 56, 103, 168, 188, 192, 208, 218ff., 227, 238, 240; ii, 4, 49ff., 104, 156, 309, 335; letter to Madame de Maintenon, ii, 109
Rainbow Coffeehouse, i, 166
Rameau, i, 256f.; ii, 10, 32, 83
Rape of the Lock, i, 173
Ravaillac, ii, 306
Raynal, ii, 116
Réaumur, i, 17, 386ff.
Receuil de Pièces fugitives en Prose et en Verse, ii, 4
Récourt, Maximilian de, i, 120
Regnante puero, i, 93
Rehnschöld, Count, i, 210, 213
Relation de la mort du Chevalier de La Barre, ii, 233
Religious tolerance, Voltaire advocates, ii, 197-200
Reminiscences of Russia, ii, 67
Reply to an Academician in Berlin, ii, 68
Réponse aux remontrances de la cour des Aides, etc., ii, 275
Report of the Jesuit Berthier's Illness, etc., ii, 137-141
Représentations aux Etats-Generaux de Hollande, Voltaire writes, in one evening, ii, 33
Requête au Roi pour les serfs de Saint Claude, ii, 291
Révol, i, 359
Reynolds, Sir Joshua, i, 189
Rheinsberg, i, 310
Ricconini, i, 247
Richard III, i, 190f.
Richelieu, Cardinal de, i, 113, 118
Richelieu, Maréchal de, i, 31, 49ff., 111, 136, 140, 150, 219, 256, 260ff., 276, 285, 287ff., 294, 302, 305, 313f., 316ff., 320ff., 328, 384, 392; ii, 9, 10, 19, 26, 34, 56, 83, 110,

125ff., 149, 190ff., 206, 264, 324, 345; commissions Voltaire to write festival play, ii, 31f; Madame du Châtelet's letter to, i, 267, 402; Madame du Châtelet's letter to, i, 51, 267, 402; Madame de la Tournelle's letters to, i, 289; Notes on ladies, i, 49, 50; promises Pierre Calas aid, ii, 194; reconciliation between Madame de Pompadour and, i, 23f.; Voltaire at the estate of, i, 112f.; Voltaire delivers Frederick's letter to, ii, 77; Voltaire's epistle to, i, 269; ii, 281
Rien, Mademoiselle, ii, 123
Rion, i, 88ff.
Rivière-Bourdet, i, 112
Robinson Crusoe, i, 184
Robinson, English Minister, i, 208
Rochebrune, i, 31
Rochefoucauld, Duke de, i, 320
Rochester, Earl of, i, 153
Rodogune, benefit performance of, ii, 161
Rohan, Cardinal de, i, 141, 277
Rohan-Chabot, Chevalier de, i, 166, 168f., 235, 376; Voltaire insulted by, i, 151f.; Voltaire attacked by, i, 152; Voltaire challenging, i, 155
Roland, Monsieur, i, 183
Roland, Madame, i, 183
Rolle, Voltaire at, ii, 230
Rollin, ii, 155
Romagnesi, i, 247
Romeo and Juliet, i, 191ff.
Rome Sauvé, i, 3, 152; ii, 50, 65
Romilly, ii, 356
Ropschka, Peter III killed at, ii, 249
Rosenacker, Frau, i, 221
Rosimond, i, 240
Rossbach, battle of, i, 269; ii, 78, 110, 262f.
Rotschild, brothers, i, 79
Rottembourg, Count de, i, 307, 313f.; Frederick the Great's letter to, i, 307
Rouen, i, 217, 242ff., 334
Roussay, i, 90
Rousseau, Jean Baptiste, i, 47, 49, 73, 100, 104, 120, 132ff., 183, 217, 247, 253, 369f.; ii, 122, 309; death of, i, 139; disciples of, ii, 93; flight of, i, 134; in Paris, ii, 102; letter to Madame de La Tournelle, ii, 104; letter to Voltaire, ii, 94; Voltaire's break with, i, 135ff.; Voltaire compared with, ii, 90, 93
Rousseau, Jean Jacques, i, 15, 65, 353, 361; ii, 86, 128, 202, 338; Madame de Pompadour's interest in, ii, 30; Tronchin's letter to, ii, 112, 113; Voltaire's acquaintance with, ii, 83-104
Rowe, i, 177
Royal Historian, Voltaire appointed, ii, 12
Rupelmonde, Count de, i, 120
Rupelmonde, Countess Marie Marguerite Elisabeth de, i, 120ff., 137, 250
Russia, Elisabeth of, ii, 12, 34
Russian Academy, Catherine founds, ii, 256
Russian-Turkish War, ii, 259
Rymer, Th., i, 190

Sablière, Madame de, i, 106
Sacy, Père, ii, 121
Sade, Abbé de, i, 346
Saint-Agnan, i, 149
St. Alby, ii, 209
Saint-André-des-Arts, i, 25, 29
Saint-Ange, Farian de, i, 75; ii, 331
Saint-Aure Convent, ii, 263f.
Saint Bartholomew, i, 124ff.
Saint-Beuve, i, 235, 240; ii, 259; on Voltaire as a poet, ii, 136
Saint-Chapelle, i, 31
Saint-Crépin, ii, 356
Saint-Cyr, ii, 257
Saint-Dizier, i, 273
Saint-Estevan, Count de, i, 121
Saint-Eustache, i, 239
Saint-Florentin, Count de, ii, 191f., 207, 283
Saint Germain en Laye, Voltaire in, i, 215
Saint-Hyacinthe, i, 369
St. James Chronicle, ii, 103, 196
Saint-Julien, ii, 316
Saint-Juste, Baron de, ii, 237
Saint-Lambert, i, 65, 361, 395, 399; ii, 40, 54, 91f., 116, 125, 322; in Cirey, i, 393ff; Madame du Châtelet's letters to, ii, 41ff., 48f., 53
Saint Lazare, prison of, i, 235
Saint-Malo, i, 387
Saint-Marc, Marquis of, ii, 337
St. Omer, ii, 277
St. Petersburg, Diderot's visit to, ii, 257
Saint-Pierre, Duchess de, i, 254, 328; ii, 155
Saint-Severin, Monsieur de, ii, 24
Saint-Simon, Duke of, i, 30, 33, 35, 57, 102, 237f.; ii, 156; on Voltaire, i, 25, 26

Saint-Sulpice, i, 237f., 324; ii, 322, 326, 329, 345, 347f.
St. Thomas Aquinas, ii, 231
Sainval, Mademoiselle, ii, 324
Saissac, Madame de, ii, 22
Saly, statue in Bellevue by, ii, 27
Samson, i, 256f.; ii, 351, 359
Sanchez, Père, ii, 61
Sand, George, ii, 93
Sans-Souci, ii, 62
Santeuil, i, 106
Satire Ménippée, i, 184
Saurin, Joseph, i, 133; arrest of, i, 134
Savoy, i, 201
Saxe, Maurice de, i, 212, 224, 230ff., 240
Saxen-Gotha, Duchess of, ii, 218
Saxony, King of, ii, 61; Maurice of, ii, 34; tax certificates of, ii, 64
Scapin, Voltaire compared to, ii, 69f.
Scarmentado, ii, 37
Scéaux, Château de, Voltaire's life at, ii, 37
Scellières, Abbey, i, 23, 28; ii, 356; Prior of, ii, 347
Scheele, i, 19
Scheherazade, Madame de Pompadour compared to, ii, 25
Schiller, Friedrich von, i, 193; ii, 93, 104
Schulenburg, i, 213f.
Schuwaloff, Voltaire's letter to, ii, 251
Scribe, i, 219
Seasons, i, 161
Séguier, ii, 270
Ségur, Countess of, ii, 151, 342
Seguy, i, 139, 374
Semiramis, i, 192, 246; ii, 49, 50, 311; parody of, ii, 50
Senart Forest, ii, 20
Sentiments des six conseils étables par le rois etc., ii, 275
Septième Discourse de la Vraie Verture, i, 52
Sermon des Cinquante, ii, 99
Servan, Antoine de, ii, 276
Servien, Abbé, i, 57, 77; Louis XIV banning, i, 76
Sevigné, Madame de, i, 33, 124
Sèvres, Madame de Pompadour establishes porcelain works at, ii, 31
Shaftesbury, i, 174f.
Shakespeare, i, 16, 178, 184, 188, 190, 209, 249, 266; ii, 11; and Ben Jonson, Voltaire and Rousseau compared to, ii, 104; Voltaire on, i, 188ff.
Shakespeare als Theaterdichter, i, 193
Shakespeare und kein Ende, i, 16
Siècle de Louis XIV, i, 35, 394f.
Sigorgne, Abbé, ii, 346
Silesia, Voltaire on conquest of, ii, 142
Singularités de la Nature, i, 224, 390
Siquier, i, 213
Sirius, ii, 361
Sirven case, ii, 206ff.
Sirven, Elisabeth, ii, 208; death of, 210, 213
Sirven family, Voltaire meets, ii, 215
Sirven, Jeanne, ii, 212
Sirven, Madame, ii, 209, 211, 217, 237, 276; death of, ii, 217; sentenced to be hanged, i, 214
Sirven, Marie-Anne, ii, 212
Sirven, Pierre Paul, ii, 207-219, 237f., order for arrest of, 211; charge against, dismissed, ii, 239; sent to Languedoc, ii, 237; sentenced to be hanged, ii, 214
Sleepless Night in Sully, i, 91
Society of Jesus, ii, 188
Soicourt, Duval de, ii, 229, 301
Soissons, Bishop of, i, 320ff.; ii, 149
Soltykoff, Catherine and, ii, 248
Song of Solomon, Voltaire's, ii, 122
Sophie Auguste, Princess, Peter III marries, ii, 242. *See* Catherine II
Sophocles, ii, 318
Sorbonne, i, 178
Sorel, Agnes, i, 315, 341, 344
Sottisier, i, 229
Soubise, Prince de, i, 49, 287; ii, 263
Soufflot, ii, 116
Soulavie, i, 279
Southey, ii, 104
Spandau, i, 312
Sparre, Axel, i, 212
Spencer, Lord, ii, 165
Spenser, i, 186
Spinoza, i, 21
Staël, Madame Delaunay de, i, 199, 364
Stair, Lord, i, 160, 162
Stanislaw, King, *see* Leczszynsky Stanislaw
States-General, Voltaire's document impresses, ii, 33
Stettin, Governor of, ii, 242

Story of Dr. Akakia and the Native of St. Malo, The, ii, 70, 73; burning of, ii, 72
Strindberg, ii, 93
Stuart, James, Pretender, i, 114f.
Suard, Madame, ii, 351
Suffolk, Countess of, i, 171
Suisse, Marie, ii, 268, 269
Sully, Duchess de, i, 111
Sully, Duke de, i, 50, 57, 76, 86, 94, 96ff., 111, 152; Voltaire's epistle to, i, 83
Sully-sur-Loire, Voltaire in, i, 90ff.
Summa Theologica, ii, 231
Sundon, Lady, i, 171; Voltaire's letter to, i, 172
Supplement to the Century of Louis XIV, i, 70
Sur les Evénements de 1774, ii, 11
Sur le Sieur Rousseau, i, 137
Sur Mlle. de Nenclos, i, 34
Swift, Jonathan, i, 115, 160, 175, 178, 197
Switzerland, Sirven returns to, ii, 237; Sirven family reach, ii, 212f.; Sirven family in, ii, 215f.; Voltaire in, ii, 80

Tacitus, ii, 244
Taillefer, i, 199
Taillis, de, ii, 278
Tale of a Tub, i, 175
Tanjur, ii, 293
Target, ii, 302
Tancrède, ii, 79, 191; Voltaire dedicates to Madame de Pompadour, ii, 29
Tart à la Crême, i, 119
Tarteron, Father, i, 46, 49
Tartuffe, i, 33; ii, 102; Madame de Pompadour stages, i, 26
Tencin, Archbishop de, i, 150, 290, 314; ii, 78, 110
Tencin, Madame de, i, 102, 106, 149ff., 156, 225, 246, 294, 302, 313, 315; ii, 24
Tersac, de, ii, 348
Théâtre Français, i, 245; ii, 356, 360
The Country Wife, i, 173
The Foundlings, i, 247
The Glory of the Kings, i, 133
The Hermit, i, 183
The Laws of Poetry, i, 190
The Merchant of Venice, i, 191
The Merry Wives of Windsor, i, 190
Théodicee, i, 174
Theodorski, Bishop, ii, 244
The Petition of an Old Soldier, i, 32
The Plain Dealer, i, 173
The Princess of Navarre, ii, 10
Thérèse Philosophe, ii, 224
Thérigny, i, 370
Theseus, the Infanta on, ii. 11
The Tempest, i, 191; ii, 11
Thibouville, ii, 318, 339
Thil, Mademoiselle du, ii, 13, 53f.
Thiriot, Nicholas Claude, i, 45, 50f., 54, 71, 131, 141, 143, 157, 161, 164, 168, 174, 195, 198ff., 215, 220, 242ff., 258, 261, 266f., 272, 376ff., 381; ii, 122, 300, 321; as correspondent to Prussian Crown Prince, i, 300; Desfontaines on, i, 376; Madame du Châtelet on, i, 377; Marquis du Châtelet's letter to, i, 379f.; visiting London, i, 199; Voltaire's letters to, i, 83f., 113, 115, 122, 145, 166, 243; ii, 78, 113, 135, 270
Thomas, Mlle., Voltaire's promissory note to, i, 105
Thomson, James, i, 161f.
Thorn, siege of, i, 210
Thoughts on Education, ii, 96
Thoulié, Father, i, 47
Thoyras, Rapin de, ii, 155, 158
Tillet, Titon de, ii, 160, 161
Tintamarre, ii, 19
Titus and Berenice, ii, 50
To be or not to be, i, 189
Tolignan, Abbé de, ii, 13, 14
Tolstoi, ii, 91, 312; disciple of Rousseau, ii, 93
Torcy, Marquis de, ii, 155
Tory, i, 114, 160f., 163
Toulon, i, 336f.
Toulouse, Count de, i, 141
Toulouse, Countess de, i, 90
Toulouse, Parliament of, ii, 276
Tournay, Voltaire buys estate in, ii, 91, 134; Voltaire's troubles as lord of, ii, 170
Tournay, Comte de, ii, 32; Voltaire signs himself, ii, 135
Tournehem, General Le Narmant de, ii, 17
Tournemine, Father, i, 45f.; V.'s letter to, i, 45
Tournette, M. de la, Rousseau's letter to, ii, 104
Traité sur la Tolérance à l'occasion de la mort de Jean Calas, ii, 197
Transoceanic Trading Company, i, 84
Traversière-Saint-Honoré, i, 216
Tremouille, Duke de, i, 141

Très humbles et très respectueuses remontrances du grenier à sel, ii, 275
Treves, i, 336
Trevoux, i, 365
Trianon, ii, 30
Tribou, i, 229
Trinquier, ii, 210f., 238; Sirven case conducted by, ii, 214
Tronchin, ii, 90, 111, 128, 130, 135, 322ff., 327, 330ff., 339, 348; on Voltaire, ii, 112; Voltaire consults, ii, 86; Voltaire sends Marie Corneille to Tronchin, ii, 161
Troyes, ii, 356
Tugendreich, Victoria, i, 221
Tuileries, i, 230; ii, 359
Turgot, ii, 116, 207, 299, 300, 303
Turin, i, 336
Twelfth Night, i, 67
Twickenham, i, 163, 173, 175
Twiss, Richard, ii, 153

Ulrike, Eleonore, i, 311f.
Un Caprice, i, 159
Utrecht, Treaty of, i, 114, 159
Uzèt, Count de, i, 71, 72

Valincour, ii, 4
Valois, Mlle. de, i, 113
Valois, House of, i, 263
Valori, M. de, i, 308
Vanloo, ii, 116; walls in Bellevue painted by, ii, 27
Varennes, Marchand de, i, 277; ii, 347
Varicourt, Reine Philiberte de, ii, 316f., 323
Vauban, i, 286
Vauréal, Abbé de, i, 109, 277f.
Vendôme, Duc de, i, 57, 79; ii, 154
Vendôme, Grand Prior of, i, 57, 75f., 85, 219
Vendôme, Prince of, Voltaire paying homage to, i, 35
Verbreck, wood-carvings in Bellevue by, ii, 27
Vergenne, Monsieur de, ii, 352
Vergil, ii, 34
Vermandois, Princess de, i, 141ff.
Vernet, ii, 116
Veronese, Paul, i, 326
Versailles, ii, 10, 11, 20, 25, 27; rôle of, i, 37, 38
Vestris, Madame, ii, 323, 332, 337, 344
Viciosa, Villa, i, 120
Vie de Mademoiselle de Lenclos, i, 33
Vie de J. B. Rousseau, i, 132
Vie de Voltaire, i, 243
Vien, ii, 116
Viguier, Jeanne, ii, 175, 176, 177, 181, 204
Villars, Marshal de, i, 50, 63, 100, 102; ii, 147, 149, 154, 166, 192; comments on Voltaire and Chevalier de Rohan, i, 155; letter to Voltaire, i, 110; Voltaire's description of, ii, 157f.
Villars, Marquise de, i, 53, 109f., 286
Villelongue, i, 209
Villerceaux, Monsieur de, ii, 339
Villette, Marquis de, ii, 317f., 320ff., 326f., 329, 332, 335, 337, 339, 350, 355, 359
Villette, Marquise de, i, 115, 171; ii, 335, 360
Villevieille, Abbé de, ii, 50
Vinache, i, 110
Vintimille, Felicité de, i, 250, 279ff; ii, 22; influence upon Louis XV, i, 280ff.
Vionnet, Père, Voltaire's letter to, ii, 137
Voisenon, Abbé de, i, 65; ii, 8
Voisin, Madame de, i, 134
Voiture, i, 39
Volland, Mademoiselle, Diderot's letter to, ii, 108
Voltaire and French criminal jurisdiction in the eighteenth century, ii, 222
Voltaire, addressing mob in London, i, 164; anecdotes on, i, 48, 62; appointed *gentilhomme ordinaire,* ii, 35; appointed Royal Historian, ii, 12; arrival in London, i, 158; as guest of Frederick the Great, ii, 60ff.; as physicist, i, 18, 19; as writer of history, ii, 154-159; childhood of, i, 25-54; coffin of hailed in Paris, i, 23; correspondence with Frederick the Great, ii, 52f,; death of, 345; dedicates *Mahomet* to Pope Benedict XIV, ii, 14; departure for England, i, 157; departure for Prussia, i, 304; disciples of, ii, 93; dying statement of, ii, 328f.; early youth of, i, 55-157; effect of Madame du Châtelet's death on, ii, 54; elected to the Academy, ii, 33; English style of, i, 170; exiled in England, i, 157ff.; Frederick's letters to, i, 404; ii, 75f.; Horace Walpole's letter to, i, 163; ill with small-pox, i, 53; impression of Paris upon, i, 35; in Brussels, i, 131ff.; in Cam-

brai, i, 120ff.; in Eastbury, i, 161f.; in England, i, 158-214; inheritance of, i, 108; in prison, i, 94ff.; in school of the Jesuits, i, 40ff.; in the Bastille, i, 155f.; letter to Frederick, ii, 57; loses title of Historian, ii, 59; on Madame de Pompadour, ii, 28; on parley between Sweden and England, i, 207f.; on sanitation, i, 8; on religion, i, 8; place in history, i, 3; poem on Algarotti, ii, 61; police watching, i, 154; quarrel with Saint-Lambert, ii, 44; receiving *lettre de cachet* from his father, i, 69; religious attitude, i, 193ff.; requesting permission for departure for England, i, 157; return to Cirey from Brussels, i, 328; return to France from England, i, 215; return to Paris from the Hague, i, 69; Rousseau's accusations of, ii, 99; secret return to France, i, 166; speculation in tax certificates, ii, 64ff.; speech on admittance to the Academy, ii, 34; verses on Maupertuis, ii, 62; verses to Frederick the Great, ii, 72
Voltarian deism, credo of, ii, 199f.
Volterra, Daniele de, i, 37
Vouglans, Muyart de, i, 10; ii, 233

Wagner, Richard, i, 296
Wagnière, i, 21; ii, 328, 334, 335, 352
Waldeck, Prince of, i, 38
Wales, Prince of, i, 162; Voltaire recommended to, i, 171
Wales, Princess of, i, 162, 197
Walpole, Horace, i, 21, 160, 162ff., 169, 175f., 192; ii, 103, 255, 325f., 340, 345
War of the Spanish Succession, i, 78, 113f.
Warens, Madame de, ii, 95
Watteau, i, 88, 326
Weimar, ii, 11
Weimar, Duke of, Goethe and, i, 296
Welhaven, i, 104
Wergeland, ii, 104
Werther, ii, 93
Westminster Abbey, i, 177ff., 242
Whigs, i, 114
Wieland, i, 5
Windischgrätz, Count von, i, 121
Winterfeld, Countess, i, 70
Wolff, i, 299
Woolsthorpe, i, 16
Woronzoff, Elizabeth, ii, 247
Wortley-Montague, Lady Mary, i, 202
Württemberg, Duchess of, i, 102
Wycherley, William, i, 173

Ximenés, Marquis de, ii, 96

Ypres, siege of, i, 319
Young, Edward, i, 161

Zadig, i, 183; ii, 37
Zaïre, i, 170, 192, 244, 246ff., 261, 356, 359; ii, 131, 318
Zulime, ii, 3, 131
Zürich, ii, 71

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